The Occultation of the Twelfth Imam

(A Historical Background)



Jassim M. Hussain

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point

(with a Foreword by Dr. I.K.A Howard, Edinburg University)

A study of the occultation of the Twelfth Imam using rarely consulted early Shi'ite sources, covering the time period from Ja'far al-Sadiq, the Sixth Imam, to the end of the lesser occultation of the Twelfth Imam.

Whereas no one can doubt the best intentions of the translator and the publishers in making this title accessible to an English speaking audience, the editing and digitization process of this book (carried out by the DILP Team) has revealed issues in the quality of translation.

Based upon this fact, the DILP team has taken the liberty to make grammatical corrections to make the text more readable and less ambiguous; spelling mistakes

and typographical errors have also been corrected and an attempt has been made to improve the highly non-standard use of transliteration of Arabic names and terms. .The online text is not an exact reproduction of the original translation

Users wishing to see the translation as it was published

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should refer to printed copies available in bookshops. Those who understand are .advised to refer directly to the original text

The Ahlul Bayt DILP Team

Dedication

This book is dedicated to Khair Allah al-Sa'dani and L. K. Hussain without whose moral .support and academic assistance it would have never been written

Preface

It is particularly welcomed that this new study of the occultation of the Twelfth Imam should be presented to those interested in the history of religion. Indeed, too little attention has been paid to this subject by scholarship generally, and especially in the West. When the matter has been discussed, it has tended to be dismissed rather .cursorily. In some measure, Dr. Hussain's work serves to restore the balance

The author, using little known and rarely consulted early Shi’ite sources, has presented a detailed study of the Imami-Shi’ite movement from the time of Ja’far al-Sadiq, the Sixth Imam, to the end of the lesser occultation of the Twelfth Imam. What emerges is a picture of a secret religious organisation with adherents all over the Islamic world. This organisation had to be secret because it was constantly subject to .persecution from the authorities

The great unifying force of the movement which Dr. Hussain describes was its belief in the Imamate as a central institution to preserve the integrity of Islam. This Imamate would be the means by which justice and equity would be eventually

brought to the world. Dr. Hussain demonstrates that the traditions about one of the Imams being

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.the Mahdi were circulating among the Shi'a from the very earliest times

He also establishes that though there was some confusion among the Shi'a as to which Imam would be the Mahdi, there was some evidence that traditions existed which said it was to be the Twelfth Imam and that traditions about the Twelfth Imam .being the last Imam even found their way into the body of Sunni literature

For the first time in English, the evidence for the existence of the Twelfth Imam is fully presented and while it is of a circumstantial nature, it is much more convincing than the usual picture presented by Western scholarship. Dr. Hussain's thorough and .sympathetic treatment of this is to be greatly welcomed

The greater occultation of the Twelfth Imam is a matter of religious faith. It, like other great religious beliefs, is not something that scholars can prove or disprove. However, it has an inner religious reality which no one can reject. The proof of this inner religious reality is that it is a doctrine that has sustained and strengthened the faith of millions of Shi'ite Muslims up to the present time. Despite persecution and tribulation, .this community and their faith have survived

This work of meticulous scholarship by Dr. Hussain is commended to all those interested in the history of the development of Islam and Shi'ism. The work of the Muhammadi Trust, and its tireless secretary in ensuring its publication is particularly .appreciated

I. K. A. Howard

,Department of Islamic Studies

University of Edinburgh

Introduction

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the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Muhammad b. al-Hasan al- ‘Askari is the Twelfth Imam of the "Imamates" or "Twelve-Imam Shi’ites", al-Ithna Ashariyya, who form the second largest denomination in Islam after the Sunnis. He appears to have been born in ۲۵۶ A.H./۸۶۹ A.D. Four years later, after the death of his father al- ‘Askari, the eleventh Imam, he .was hidden from the authorities of the ‘Abbasid caliphs as a precaution

His whereabouts were disclosed only to a very few of his followers. Four of his father's close associates became successive mediators between the Imam and his .followers until the year ۳۲۹/۹۴۱

This period has been considered by the Imamites as the first or the short occultation (al-Ghayba) of the Twelfth Imam. During it the four Saf’irs directly supervised the underground religious and political activities

.of the Imamites

The last Saf’ir announced on his death-bed in ۳۲۹/۹۴۱ that the Twelfth Imam had decided not to appoint another Saf’ir and had entered into total occultation. The Imamites considered this declaration the beginning of the Twelfth Imam's second .occultation, which has continued until the present time

Because of the second occultation the series of Imams stopped at the number twelve. Accordingly the Imamites believe that the Twelfth Imam is al-Qa’im ("he who will rise"), whose rising was promised by the Prophet. For the Prophet is said to have predicted that a descendant of his daughter Fatima would rise with the sword and fill the world with justice and equity. For this reason the Imamites

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believe that he is still alive, but in a state of occultation until the moment of his rising at

.an unspecified time in the future

Since the first half of the fourth/tenth century many scholars have examined the occultation of the Twelfth Imam purely from the theological point of view, even though this event appears to have been historical. However, because of the close connection between the occultation and the Imamate (al-Imama) or the religious and political leadership, it became involved with Shi'ite theological discussions and .gradually its historical aspects came to be ignored

Thus modern scholars like Ignaz Goldziher, Margoliouth, Snouck Hurgronje and Darmesteter were inclined to study the occultation of the Twelfth Imam as a .theological phenomenon and tried to trace its pre-Islamic origins

The present inquiry is an attempt to study the historical background and circumstances of the occultation of the Twelfth Imam. The Imamites had political ambitions to obtain political power under the leadership of an Imam called al-Qa'im bi-l-sayf (the one who will rise with the sword). This study tries to examine the role of these ambitions in his occultation and to trace as well the evolution of the underground Imamite organization (al-Wikala) and its role during the time of the .Twelfth Imam's short occultation

It is essential to make a survey of the main sources of this study so that the viewpoint of each of them can be understood and the information they contain evaluated .accordingly

Survey of the Sources

Books on the question of the Ghayba .۱

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It is indeed an old idea in Imamite history that

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one Imam from the progeny of the Prophet would go into hiding to prepare for the

day when he would rise again under the title al-Qa’im al-Mahdi and fill the world with justice. The concealment (al-Ghayba) was considered a sign of the true al-Qa’im al-Mahdi and both before and after the occultation of the Twelfth Imam in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴.

Many Shi’ite writers collected traditions attributed to the Prophet and the Imams concerning this issue. These traditions were used by many Shi’ite groups to back up the claims of their leaders who aspired to power by adopting the title of al-Qa’im al-Mahdi.

Before ۲۶۰/۸۷۴ they were used even by some Imamites themselves as evidence that one or another of their deceased Imams was in fact al-Qa’im al-Mahdi. Finally the same traditions have been used by the Imamites to support their claims that the Twelfth Imam was al-Qa’im al-Mahdi himself. These works on the subject of the Ghayba can be divided into three groups based on the dates of their authorship.

A. Books on the question of the occultation written before ۲۶۰/۸۷۴

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The Imamite scholars wrote about four hundred books (al-Usul al Arba’mi'a)during the lifetimes of the first eleven Imams. Some of these dealt with the subject of the Imam's concealment, recording traditions on the authority of the Prophet and the Imams predicting that an Imam would go into occultation.

These traditions, however, neither named the Imam nor fixed the time at which his occultation would begin. The ambiguity of these traditions encouraged many Shi’ites to apply them to different Imams. Hence the Waqifa

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sect held that Musa al-Kazim, the seventh Imam, was the hidden Imam whereas al-Imamiyya al-Qat’iyya and al-Zaydiyya al-Jarudiyya (۱) held that the hidden Imam would be the Twelfth, but they did not identify him by name.

Despite the fact that a great majority of these early works are not extant, it appears

that during the fourth and fifth centuries the Imamite authors based their works concerning al-Ghayba on these early writings. The following works are examples of the Waqifite, Zaydite and Imamite views on this matter.

The Waqifa

1. Al-Anmati Ibrahim b. Salih al-Kufi, was a companion of the fifth Imam, al-Baqir (d. ۱۱۴/۷۳۲). He wrote a book entitled al Ghayba which represents the Waqifite point of view, although the information he gave was used by such later scholars as Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Nuh (d. before ۴۲۳/۱۰۳۱) and al-Tusi to support the Imamite view(۲).

2. Al-Ta'i al-Tatari, 'Ali b. al-Hasan, was a companion of the seventh Imam, al-Kazim (d. ۱۸۳/۷۹۹), whom he named as the hidden Imam. In defence of his view he wrote Kitab al-Ghayba, which became the framework for the works of later Waqifite authors like Ibn Suma'a (d. ۲۶۳/۸۷۷) on this issue(۳).

3. Al-Hasan b. Muhammad b. Suma'a, composed a book on al-Ghayba, following the footsteps of his Waqifite teacher al-Ta'i al Tatari(۴).

However, those Imamites who lived during the period from ۲۶۰-۳۲۹/۸۷۴-۹۴۰-۱ such as al-Hasan al-Saffar (d. ۲۹۲/۹۰۴) and al Kulayni (d. ۳۲۹/۹۴۰), used his information to support their claim that the hidden Imam was not the seventh Imam but the

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۱- The founder of this sect was Abu al-Jarud Ziyad b. al-Mundhir, the companion of the fifth Imam, al-Baqir. After the revolt of Zayd b. 'Ali, Abu al-Jarud abandoned his allegiance to al-Baqir and put forward the claim of Zayd, establishing a new sect called al-Zaydiyya al-Jarudiyya. Some later representatives of this sect agree with the Imamites that the series of the Imams ended with the number twelve but others claim that there were thirteen by including Zayd

۲- Ahmad b. al-'Abbas al-Najashi, Kitab al-Rijal (Tehran, n.d.), ۱۲, ۱۹; Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Tusi, al-Fihrist (Mashhad, ۱۹۷۲), ۱۴; Ibn Dawud al Hilli, Kitab al-Rijal (Tehran, ۱۹۶۴), ۱۵, ۴۱۶.

.al-Najashi, ١٩٣; T. al-Fihrist, ٢١۶-٧ -٣

.al-Najashi, ٣٢-٣; T. al-Fihrist, ٩٧-٨ -۴

.(Twelfth Imam(١

The Zaydites

Abu Said ‘Abbad b. Ya’qub al-Rawajini al- ‘Asfari (d. ٢۵٠/٨۶۴) was one of the leading scholars of the Shi’ite sect al-Zaydiyya alJarudiyya. He compiled a book of traditions entitled Kitab Abu Said al- Asfari. The importance of this work is that its author cites a .tradition referring to the occultation at least ten years before its occurrence

He also mentions other traditions which point to the fact that the number of the Imams would end with the Twelfth Imam and that he would be al-Qa’im. However, in .contrast to the Imamites he does not mention the names of the twelve Imams

Al-’Asfari's work along with the works of Sulaym b. Qays (d. ٨٠٩٠/۶٩٩-٧٠٧) and al-Hasan b. Mahbub al-Sarrad (d. ٢۴۴/٨٣٨) were used extensively by such Imamites as al-Kulayni (d. ٣٢٩/٩۴١), al Nu'mani (d. ٣۶٠/٩٧٠) and al-Saduq (d. ٣٨٠/٩٩١) to prove the existence of the .Twelfth Imam and his subsequent occultation

The Imamites

Ali b. Mahzayar al-Ahwazi was a close associate of the ninth Imam, al-Jawad. He‘ .١ was appointed by the latter as his representative in al-Ahwaz and continued to remain in office throughout the reign of the tenth Imam, al-Hadi. He wrote two books, called Kitab al-Malahim and Kitab al-Qa’im, both dealing with the occultation of the .(Imam and his subsequent rising with the sword(٢

Then between the years ٢۶٠/٨٧۴ and ٣٢٩/٩۴٠ his two sons Ibrahim and Muhammad became the authorised representatives of the Twelfth Imam in al-Ahwaz. It is on their authority that al-Kulayni and al-Sadug give important information concerning the

۱- Muhammad b. Ya'qub al-Kulayni, al-Kafi fi 'Ilm al-Din (Tehran, ۱۳۸۱), I, ۳۳۵-۶; al-Najashi, ۳۹.

۲- al-Najashi, ۱۹۱; T. al-Fihrist, ۲۲۶.

communication methods employed in the underground activities of the Imamites.

۲. In his work on the subject of al-Ghayba called al Mashyakha, al-Hasan b. Mahbub al-Sarrad (d. ۲۲۴/۸۳۸) records several anedoctes which are often attributed to the Imams. This work has been lost but several quotations from it are included in the available Imamite sources.

۳. Al-Fadl b. Shadhan al-Nisaburi (d. ۲۶۰/۸۷۳) was a wellknown Imamite scholar and secured the trust and the praise of the eleventh Imam. He also compiled a book called al-Ghayba(۱), but most of its material seems to have been quoted from the work of al-Hasan b. Mahbub(۲). Since al-Fadl died two months before the death of the eleventh Imam in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴, the importance of his work lies in the traditions he recorded indicating that the Twelfth Imam would be al-Qa'im.

Many later writers like al-Tusi in his own work entitled al-Ghayba, relied on al-Fadl's work. Baha al-Din al-Nili (d. ۷۹۰/۱۳۸۸) also compiled a work entitled al-Ghayba by summarising al-Fadl's work(۳). Despite the fact that the actual work of al-Fadl is lost, the works Kifayat al-Muhtadi fi Ma'rifat al-Mahdi by Mirlawhi (d. ۱۲th/۱۸th century) and Kashf al-Astir by Mirza Husayn al-Nuri (d. ۱۳۲۰/۱۹۰۲) seems to be copies of his work(۴). Therefore it is not unreasonable to make use of these later sources for our present purposes.

B. Books on the Question of the Ghayba written between the years ۲۶۰–۳۲۹/۸'۷۴–۹۴۱

During the years of the short occultation (۲۶۰-۳۲۹/۸۷۴-۹۴۱) many books reflecting different views were composed on the question of al Ghayba. These were mainly collections of anecdotes based on works written before ۲۶۰/۸۷۴.

۱- al-Najashi ۲۳۵-۶.

.al-Galbagani, Muntakhab al-Athar (Tehran, n.d.), ۴۶۷ -۲

.Buzurg, al-Dhari'a, XX, ۲۰۱ -۳

.Buzurg, al-Dhari'a, XVI, ۸۲; al-Galbagani, op.cit., ۴۶۷ -۴

Their authors were either jurists or propagandists and they participated in the activities of the underground organization of the Imamites led by the Twelfth Imam .himself

Thus they recorded important information, which cannot be found in books on history compiled during the same period. In ۲۶۲/۸۷۶, Ibrahim b. Ishaq al-Nahawandi (d. ۲۸۶/۸۹۹) claimed to be the representative of the Twelfth Imam in Baghdad(۱).

He composed a book about the Ghayba reflecting the view of the extremists (al-Ghulat). Later al-Nu'mani (d. ۳۶۰/۹۷۰) used al Nahawandi's information extensively in composing his well-known book al- Ghayba.(۲)

Abd Allah b. Ja'far al-Himyari (d. after ۲۹۳/۹۰۵) wrote a book entitled al-Ghayba wa-l-' Hayra. The importance of his work lies in the fact that he was one of the close associates of the tenth and the eleventh Imams and later became the agent of the first two deputies (Saf'irs) of the Twelfth Imam. Unfortunately this work and the work called al-Imama wa-l-Tabsira min al-Hayra by Ibn Babawayh (d. ۳۲۹/۹۴۰) are not extant. However, the latter's son, al-Saduq (d. ۳۸۲/۹۹۱) and al-Tusi (d. ۴۶۰/۱۰۶۷) made .thorough use of these works

Al-Kulayni (d. ۳۲۹/۹۴۰) devoted much space in the section entitled al-Hujja of his book al-Kafi to the question of the occultation. He backs up this study with important information on the general situation of the Imamites between the years ۲۶۰-۳۲۹/۸۷۴-۹۴۰ with special emphasis on the role of the Saf'irs of the Imam in this period. He recorded many traditions attributed to the Imams concerning the concealment of the .Twelfth Imam

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.al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar (Tehran, ۱۳۹۵), LI, ۳۰۰-۱ -۱

.N. al-Ghayba, ۱۴۳, ۱۵۶, ۱۶۳, ۱۸۵ -۲

He quoted this information from the earlier Waqifite and Imamite authors like al-Hasan b. Mahbub (d. ۲۲۴/۸۳۸), ‘Abbad b. Ya'qub al- ‘Asfari (d. ۲۵۰/۸۶۴) and al-Hasan b. Suma’a (d. ۲۶۳/۸۷۷). Moreover the agents of the Twelfth Imam were the main source .of his information on the underground activities of the Imamites

C. Books on the question of the Ghayba written after ۳۲۹/۹۴۱

The occurrence of the second occultation in ۳۲۹/۹۴۱ led to a state of confusion among the Imamites. Hence several works were composed to justify the Twelfth Imam's occultation and to explain the reasons for its prolongation. Five works of this period can be considered the basis for all later Imamite opinions concerning the occultation. Since these primary sources have been widely used in this book, it is worth evaluating .the information they contain in some detail

Al-Nu’mani, Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. Ja’far, known as Ibn Abi Zaynab, was a native .۱ of the town of Nu’maniyya, one of the districts of Wasit. He moved to Baghdad where he was educated in Hadith transmission under the supervision of al-Kulayni (d. ۳۲۹/۹۴۰) and Ibn ‘Uqda (d. ۳۳۳/۹۴۴). He then went to Syria where he died around the year .۳۶۰/۹۷۰

Because of the confusion which had spread amongst the Shi’ites after the death of the eleventh Imam, al- ‘Askari, in the year ۲۶۰/۸۷۴, al-Nu’mani wrote a book entitled al-Ghayba. He tried to prove the necessity of the Twelfth Imam's occultation by relating traditions on the authority of the Prophet and the Imams predicting its occurrence. He acquired most of his information from early authors who

.wrote on this subject, irrespective of their doctrinal views

Among such early authors are al-Hasan b. Mahbub, an Imamite (d. ۲۲۴/۸۳۸), al Fadl b. Shadhan, an Imamite (d. ۲۶۰/۸۷۳), al-Hasan b. Suma’a, a Waqifite (d. ۲۶۳/۸۷۷), Ibrahim b. Ishaq al-Nahawandi, an extremist (d. ۲۸۶/۸۹۹), al-Kulayni, an Imamite (d. ۳۲۹/۹۴۰), the

.(well-known Zaydite jurist Ibn ‘Uqda (d. ٣٣٣/٩٤٤), and al-Mas'udi (d. ٣٤٥/٩٥٦)(١)

Al-Nu'mani's outstanding contribution was that he was the first compiler after al-Mas’udi (d. ٣٤٥/٩٥٦) to give an interpretation of those traditions attributed to the Imams by al-Kulayni, which indicated that al-Qa’im would have two occupations, the first short and the second long. Al-Nu'mani stated that the first occultation was the period of the four representatives of the Twelfth Imam, lasting from the year ٢٦٠/٨٧٤ until the year ٣٢٩/٩٤٠-١, and that the second began after the death of the fourth Saf’ir (in ٣٢٩/٩٤١.(٢)

Some of his remarks reflect how the complete occultation of the Twelfth Imam threw the Imamites into confusion and caused a massive decrease in their numbers. His .interpretation became the basis for all later Imamite works on this subject

٢. Muhammad b. ‘Ali b. Babawayh, who is better known as al-Saduq (d. ٣٨١/٩٩١), wrote a book on the question of the Ghayba entitled Kama’l al-Di'n wa Tamam al-Ni’ma. The information contained in this work is valuable because al-Saduq relied on the Shi’ite (primary sources (al-Usul) which had been compiled before ٢٦٠/٨٧٤.(٣)

Thus we find that he often refers to the authors al-Hasan b. Mahbub, al-Fadl b. .Shadhan, al-Hasan b

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١- ١٠٠, ٨٢-٦, N. al-Ghayba.

٢- ٩١-٢, N. al-Ghayba.

٣- ١٩, Kama’l.

Suma’a, al-Saffar, alHimyari and his own father, Ibn Babawayh(١), who had close ties with the third and fourth Saf’irs of the Twelfth Imam. Because his father was an eminent jurist and the Imam's agent in Qumm, al-Saduq was able to give reliable information regarding the underground communications between the agents and the .Imam via his four Saf’irs

However, a study of the chain of transmitters (isnad) of some of his reports concerning the birth of the Twelfth Imam indicates that al-Saduq obtained his information from extremists such as Muhammad b. Bahr. Consequently, one must be .careful in using these reports

Muhammad b. Muhammad b. al-Nu'man, who is known as al-Mufid (d. ۴۱۳/۱۰۲۲), was .۳ at one time the leader of the Imamites. During this time the question of the occultation began to penetrate theological discussions. Hence he wrote five articles in defence of the occultation of the Twelfth Imam and also compiled an independent work entitled al-Fusul al-'Ashara fi al-Ghayba. Despite the dogmatic approach of this work, it records valuable information concerning the historical circumstances .surrounding the disappearance of the Twelfth Imam before ۲۶۰/۸۷۴

Al-Mufid also presents an exposition similar to that of al-Nawbakhti and Sa'd al-Qummi putting forward the fifteen different views held by the Imamites after ۲۶۰/۸۷۴. Al Mufid bore witness to the disappearance of all fifteen groups by ۳۷۳/۹۸۳, except the Twelvers who believed that their leader was the Twelfth Imam and that he was in .concealment

In his book al-Irshad, al-Mufid follows the method employed by al-Kulayni and

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.Kama'l, ۱۲۷, ۱۳۳, ۱۸۷, ۲۱۱, ۲۲۲, ۱۷۴, ۳۸۱ -۱

alNu'mani in the narration of Hadith, first of all by proving the existence of the Twelfth Imam and then by vindicating the prolongation of his age beyond the life-span of an .ordinary person

After al-Mufid his two eminent pupils 'Ali b. al-Husayn, better known as al-Murtada .۴ (d. ۴۳۶/۱۰۴۴), and Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Karajaki (d. ۴۴۹/۱۰۵۷), followed his rational approach in their treatises on the prolongation of the Twelfth Imam's concealment. This approach is clear in the extant article of al-Murtada which was published in Baghdad in ۱۹۵۵ under the title Masa'la wajiza fi al Ghayba and translated into English

.(by Sachedina(۱

In ۴۲۷/۱۰۳۵ al Karajaki compiled a work entitled al-Burhan ‘ala Sihhat Tul ‘Umr al Imam Sahib al-Zaman, in which he mentions many people whose ages had been prolonged beyond the life-span of an ordinary person. His aim in this was to prove, like al-Saduq and al-Mufid before him, that the prolongation of the Twelfth Imam's life during his .occultation was not an extraordinary phenomenon

On account of the dogmatic approach of these two works they are devoid of any historical information concerning the actual career of the Twelfth Imam between the .years ۲۶۰-۳۲۹/۸۷۴-۹۴۱

.۵ The well-known Imamite scholar Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Tusi (d. ۴۶۰/۱۰۶۷) deals with the question of the Ghayba of the Twelfth Imam in most of his dogmatic works. But the most important of these is Kitab al- Ghayba, in which he makes use of both ,tradition and reason to prove that the Twelfth Imam was al-Qa’im al-Mahdi

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۱ - Sachedina, A Treatise on the Occultation of the Twelfth Imamite Imam, Studia .Islamica (Paris, ۱۹۷۸), XLVIII, ۱۱۷-۲۴

and that he must be in a state of occultation. Through his refutation of the other Shi’ite claims, which held that ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (d. ۴۱/۶۶۱), Ibn al-Hanafiyya (d. ۸۴/۷۰۳), al-Sadiq (d. ۱۴۸/۷۶۵), Muhammad b. Isma'il, and al-Kazim (d. ۱۸۳/۷۹۹) were al-Qa’im and that they were in hiding, he suggests that the traditions concerning the occultation go .back to the time of 'Ali

Al-Tusi also provides reliable historical information on the underground activities of the four representatives of the Twelfth Imam, quoting from a missing book entitled Akhbar al- Wukala' al Arba'a by Ahmad b. Nuh al-Basri. Al-Tusi's work became the main source for all the later Imamite writers regarding the concealment of the .Twelfth Imam, particularly al-Majlisi (d. ۱۱۱۱/۱۶۹۹) in his work Bihar al-Anwar

A contemporary of al-Kulayni was Abu al-Qasim al-Balkhi, a Mu'tazilite, who died around the year ۳۰۱/۹۱۳. He held that the eleventh Imam had died heirless and gave expression to these opinions in his work al-Mustarshid, which is a refutation of Ibn Qubba's book al-Insaf. Unfortunately his work has been lost. However judging by the quotations recorded in the book al-Mughni by al-Qadi ‘Abd al-Jabbar (d. ۴۱۵/۱۰۲۴), it appears that al-Balkhi relied on al-Hasan al-Nawbakhti (d. ca. ۳۱۰/۹۲۲) for information concerning the divisions among the Imamites after the year ۲۶۰/۸۷۴.(۱)

As for al-Ash’ari (d. ۳۲۴/۹۳۵), he depended on al-Balkhi for his information about the Imamites. In fact after al-Ash'ari's conversion to the group of Ahl al-Hadith, later to be the Sunnites, his books became the main source

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۱- al-Qadi ‘Abd al-Jabbar, al-Mughni fi Abwab al-Tawhid, al-Imama (Cairo, ۱۹۶۳), II, ۱۷۶, ۱۸۲.

for the later Sunnite writers, such as al Baghdadi (d. ۴۲۹/۱۰۳۷) in his work al-Farq bayn al-Firaq(۱) , the writer Ibn Hazm (d. ۴۵۶/ ۱۰۶۳) in his work al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa-l-Ahwa' wa l-Nihal and later al-Shahristani (d. ۵۴۸/۱۱۵۳) in his work al-Milal wa l-Nihal(۲).

However the information contained in the latter works concerning the Imamite schisms after the death of al- ‘Askari is so far removed from the original expostion of al-Balkhi and al-Nawbakhti that one has to be careful about relying upon it.

۲. The Biographical Works

Among the primary sources of this study are the books of al-Rijal, which deal with the scientific biographies of the narrators and compilers of traditions by estimating the degree of their authority and deducing their reliability from their dogmatic and political inclinations.

The Imamites compiled four main biographical works concerned with the domain of the present study in the ۴th-۵th/۱۰th-۱۱th centuries.

The first is Ma'rifat al-Naqilin ‘an al-A'imma al-Sadiqin, compiled by Muhammad b. .۱ ‘Umar al-Kashshi. He was a native of the town of Kashsh near Samarqand, where he was brought up under the auspices of the Imamite scholar Muhammad b. Mas'ud al ـ Samarqandi and where he spent the whole of his life. According to al Tusi he died in (۳۶۸/۹۷۸.(۳

Al-Kashshi quoted his information from fifty-three narrators, but his main source was ‘Ali b. Muhammad b. Qutayba of Nishapur(۴), who was contemporary with the short occultation and had close ties with the agents of the Twelfth Imam in Khurasan. Ibn Qutayba provides important information concerning the

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۱- al-Baghdadi, al-Farq bayn al-Firaq (Beirut, ۱۹۷۳), ۲۴, ۵۱-۲.
۲- - Ibn Hazm, ‘Ali b. Muhammad, al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa-I-Ahwa' wa-l-Nihal (Cairo, ۱۳۱۷-۲۱), IV, ۱۸۰, ۱۸۸; al-Shahristani, al-Milal wa-l-Nihal (London, ۱۸۶۴),۱۲۸.
۳- al-Najashi, ۲۸۸; T.Rijal ۴۵۸.
۴- al-Najashi, ۱۹۷.

evolution of the underground organization of the Imamites (al-Wikala) after al-Sadiq (d. ۱۴۸/۷۶۵) and the reason behind the rise of the Waqifite groups after the death of the seventh Imam in ۱۸۳/۷۹۹.

Al-Kashshi's work became an important source for later Imamite scholars like al-Tusi (d. ۴۶۰/۱۰۶۷), who summarised it and gave it the title Ikhtiyar Ma’rifat al-Rijal.

۲,۳. Al-Tusi's works, al-Fihrist and al-Rijal, are two of the four main Imamite books of al-Rijal. He cites different chains of transmitters (isnad) regarded as authentic and enables us to discover the links between the Imamite scholars and the agents during the short occultation.

۴. The fourth Imamite work on al-Rijal is Fihrist Asma' Musannifi al-Shi’a, which was written by Ahmad b. 'Ali al-Najashi (d. ۴۵۰/۱۰۵۸), a native of Kufa. He received his Shi’ite education there and then moved to Baghdad, where he was one of the leading

.(Imamite scholars along with al-Murtada (d. ۴۳۶/۱۰۴۴

His residing in these two cities enabled him to establish close contact with fortyfive Imamite scholars who had in their possession documents related to the period of the short occultation. These documents cast light on the different ranks within the Imamite organization and provide useful information on works on the Ghayba .compiled before and after ۲۶۰/۸۷۴

Al-Barqi (d. ۲۷۸/۸۹۱), in his work on al-Rijal, provides valuable reports concerning the relationship between the Imams and their followers in particular the tenth and .eleventh Imams, since he was their contemporary

Despite the fact that the work of al-Dhahabi (d. ۷۴۸/ ۱۳۴۷) entitled Mizan al-I'tidal is

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a later source, it contains some reports which elucidate the background of the .Ghayba and its connection with the rise of al-Qa'im

The Books of General History ۳

Al-Tabari (d. ۳۱۰/۹۲۲) lived during the periods of the short occultation. His work Tarikh al-RUsul wa-l-Muluk is devoid of any information on the activities of the representatives of the Twelfth Imam, which points to the fact that their activities .were underground

Alternatively, he does follow the militant activities of the other Shi'ite groups like the Qaramita and the Isma'ilis until the establishment of their state in ۲۹۶/۹۰۸. He also traces the use of the prophetic traditions regarding al-Qa'im al-Mahdi by these .groups in their struggle for power during the time of the short occultation

Al-Mas'udi (d. ۳۴۶/۹۵۷) lived during the period of the second occultation and provides important information regarding the harsh treatment of the Imams and their followers by the 'Abbasids and the effect of this policy on the occurrence of the Ghayba. This can be found in his works, Muruj al-Dhahab, al-Tanbah wa-l-Ishraf and

.(Ithbat al-Wasiyya (attributed to him

In his work al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh, Ibn al-Athir (d. ۶۳۰/ ۱۲۳۲) provides a useful report concerning the schisms among the agents of the Twelfth Imam and the role of the extremists in these schisms, especially al-Shalmaghani. It is possible that Ibn al-Athir quotes his information from an Imamite work entitled Tarikh al-Imamiyya by Yahya b. Abi Tay (d. ۶۳۰/۱۲۳۲). Unfortunately, however, this work is not extant.

Many other historical and geographical works and books of traditions have also been used in

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the present study. Before they have been employed, they have been considered with the same critical method as that used above.

The Role of Traditions in the Occultation of the Twelfth Imam

point

After the martyrdom of al-Husayn, the Imamite Imams from 'Ali b. al-Husayn to al-Hasan al-'Askari followed a quiescent policy towards the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids. But they expected that all their suffering would be terminated by al-Qa'im, whose rising in arms they were awaiting.

The Imamites based their expectations on their interpretation of certain Qur'anic verses and on numbers of traditions attributed to the Prophet concerning the political and religious role of al-Qa'im. So it is essential to discuss some of these Qur'anic verses and traditions in order to see their effect upon the attitude of the 'Abbasids towards the Imamites, and consequently their reactions to the question of the occultation (al-Ghayba) of the Twelfth Imam.

۱. The early usage of the term al-Mahdi

The term al-Mahdi, which means "the one who is guided by Allah", is the passive participle of the stem hada, "to guide". A term that occurs twice in the Qur'an is the

,active participle of the same stem, al Hada, the Guide. The first verse states

(Allah is surely the Guide of those who believe" (al-Hajj, ۲۲:۵۳"

,while the second states

(But the Lord is a sufficient Guide and Helper" (al-Furqan, ۲۵:۳۳"

In the usage of the Qur'an the eighth form of the same stem, ihtada, "he accepted the guidance for himself", is used strictly as a reflexive passive, whose participle is Muhtada. So Man, who is guided by Allah, is not simply guided, but

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reacts himself to the divine guidance (hidaya)(۱), either by instinct or intellect. Through these two means he can acquire knowledge of Allah, which leads him to worship Him .by following His laws on earth

However, Allah's laws cannot be discovered through these two sources of knowledge, so throughout the course of history Allah has revealed His knowledge and laws to a group of people who have been divinely guided to lead mankind towards His straight path. These people are called "Prophets" and possessed charismatic qualities which enabled them to implement the commands of Allah and to lead the people without error. Hence they are called in the Qur'an al Hudat (sing. al-hadi), because they were .(already rightly guided (muhtadin) by Allah(۲

The term al-Mahdi (the guided one) has the same meaning as al-Muhtadi. However, it has been applied to certain individuals in the early Islamic period as an honorific title, while also being applied to al-Qa'im. Many examples can be cited showing that the term al-Mahdi was used in these two senses. For example the poet Hassan b. Thabit :((d. ۵۴/۶۷۳) applied the term al-Mahdi to the Prophet in a qasida when he says(۳

ثَاوِياً اَصْبَحَ اَلْمَهْدِى عَلى جَزَاء

تَبْعِدِی لا الْحَصَا وَطَأَ مَنْ خَیْرِ یَا

!Sorrow for the Mahdi who is buried

!O best of those who walked on Earth, be not far

.(The poet Jarir applies this term to Ibrahim, the prophet(۴

The Sunnites often applied it to the four caliphs after the Prophet, who were called al-Khulafa' al-Rashidun

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.EI ۱, art. "al-Mahdi", ۱۱۲ -۱

.Sachedina, op.cit., ۶-۷ -۲

.Ibn Hisham, Das Leben Muhammads (Wustenfeld, Gottingen, ۱۸۵۹), II, ۱۰۲۴ -۳

Goldziher, al-'Aqida wa-l-Shari'a, tr. Muhammad Yusuf (Cairo, ۱۳۷۸/۱۹۵۹), ۳۲۷-۸, ۳۷۶- -۴ .۸

al-Mahdiyyun, the divinely guided caliphs.(۱)' Sulayman b. Surd called al-Husayn, after .(his martyrdom, Mahdi b. al-Mahdi(۲

As for the theological usage of this term, according to Rajkowski, Abu Ishaq Ka'b b. Mati' b. Haysu' al-Himyari (d. ۳۴/۶۵۴) was the first individual to speak of al-Mahdi as the Saviour(۳). But it is worth mentioning that the second caliph, 'Umar b. al-Khattab, had .spoken of occultation before Ka'b

When the Prophet died in ۱۱/۶۳۲, ' Umar contended that Muhammad had not died but had concealed himself as Moses did and would return from his occultation. 'Umar's claim, however, was refuted by Abu Bakr, who reminded him of the Qur'anic verse :revealing the death of the Prophet(۴) which states

Surely you shall die and they [too] shall surely die. Then surely on the Day of" .[Resurrection you will contend with one another before your Lord" [al-Zumar, ۳۹:۳۰-۳۱

The follower of Ibn al-Hanafiyya (d. ۸۱-۴/۷۰۰-۳)(۵), al-Mukhtar, who was in revolt in

Kufa in ۶۶/۶۸۵, named him as claimant to the Imamate and called him al-Mahdi in the messianic context(۶).

Later the name of Ibn al-Hanafiyya became associated with the Kaysaniyya sect, which denied his death and held that he was the promised Mahdi, who had concealed himself in Mound Radwa, and who would rise in arms to eliminate injustice(۷).

The Kaysaniyya dogma played an important role in Islamic political history during the Umayyad period, since the ‘Abbasid propaganda, which brought about the collapse of the Umayyads, was in fact derived from this sect(۸).

The dogma of

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۱ - D.Sunan, IV, ۲۰۱; Ibn Maja, Sunan, I, ۱۶; Ibn A'tham al-Kufi, Kitab al-Futuh (Hyderabad, ۱۹۷۲), V, ۳۱, ۳۴.

۲ - Tabari, II, ۵۴۶. Ibn A'tham reports a letter attributed to the Kufans, sent to al-Husayn b. ‘Ali encouraging him to rebel against the Umayyads, in which they used the title al-Mahdi for al-Husayn as an honorific adjective: سديداً مباركاً مسروراً فرحاً الينا فاقبل مهدياً عينا خليفه إماماً مطاعاً اميراً وسيداً Ibn A'tham, op. cit., V, ۴۷.

۳ - Rajkowski, op. cit., ۱۶۶-۷. There is evidence which supports the claim that Ka'b narrated traditions attributed to the People of the Book which predict the rise of al-Mahdi It is obvious from a line of poetry attributed to the poet Kutayr that those who applied this term to Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya were influenced by Ka'b. This can be noted in Kuthayyir's saying: Huwa al-Mahdi Akhbarnahu / Ka'bun Akhu al-Akhbar fi al-Huqab al-Khawali; al-Zubayri, Nasab Quraysh (Beirut, ۱۹۵۳), ۴۱.

۴- Kama'l, ۳۰-۲.

۵ - Al-Nawbakhti thinks that Ibn al-Hanafiyya died in ۸۱/۷۰۰ (Firaq, ۲۴), whereas al-Saduq puts his death in ۸۴/۷۰۳; Kama'l, ۳۶; Ikhtiyar, ۱۲۶.

۶- B. Firaq, ۳۳-۴.

۷- N. Firaq, ۲۵-۶; Milal, ۱۱۱-۲; B. Firaq, ۱۷, ۲۷-۸, ۳۸.

۸- N. Firaq, ۲۹-۳۰, ۴۲-۳. For a full account of the fact that the ‘Abbasid propaganda was

the outcome of a branch of the Kaysaniyya movement, see al Ansari, Madhdhib ibtada'atha al-Siyasa fi al-Islam (Beirut, ۱۹۷۳), ۱۵۲-۸, ۱۹۹-۲۱۴.

al-Kaysaniyya can be seen in the poetry of Kuthayyir (d. ۱۰۵/۷۲۳) and al-Sayyid al-Himyari (d. ۱۷۳/۷۸۹). The latter had followed this sect, but it is said that he became an Imamite after a discussion with al-Sadiq, who clarified for him that the concealed Imam mentioned by the Prophet was not Ibn al-Hanafiyya but the Twelfth Imam from the progeny of al-Husayn(۱).

The Zaydites also applied the term al-Mahdi in its eschatological sense to their leaders who rose in arms against the 'Abbasids, such as Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya (d. ۱۴۵/۷۶۲), Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. ۲۰۳/۸۱۸), and Muhammad b. al-Qasim al-Talqan, who disappeared in the year ۲۱۹/۸۳۴.'(۲)

An example of the Zaydite usage of this term is recorded by Ibn Tawus (۳), who states on the authority of Ibrahim b. 'Abd Allah b. al-Hasan, the brother of al-Nafs al Zakiyya, that the latter had rebelled hoping that Allah might make him the Mahdi promised by the Prophet:

ذکر یحی بن الحسین الحسنی فی کتاب الامالی باسناده عن طاهر بن عبید عن ابراهیم بن عبدالله بن الحسن علیه السلام، انه سُئل عن اخیه محمد أهو المهدی الذی یُذکر؟ فقال: ان المهدی عده من الله تعالی لنبیه صلوات الله علیه وعده ان یجعله من اهله مهدیا لم یمسه بعینه ولم یوقت زمانه. وقد قام اخی لله بغریفته علیه فی الامر بالمعروف والنهی عن المنکر. فان اراد الله تعالی ان یجعله الذی یذکر فهو فضل الله یمن به علی من یشاء من عبادو والا فلم یترکی اخی فریضه الله علیه لانتظار میعاد لم یُؤمر بانتظاره.

As for the

۱- Kama'l, ۳۲-۴; al-Zubayri, op.cit., ۴۱-۲.
۲- N. Firaq, ۵۴; 'Uyun, ۱۵۵; Maqatil, ۳۵۹; B. Firaq, ۴۴.
۳- Ibn Tawus, al-Iqbal, ۵۳.

Imamites, a considerable body among them applied the title of al-Mahdi in its

messianic sense to each Imam after his death. This can be seen in the claim of al-Nawusiyya, al-Waqifa and the followers of al- 'Askari, the eleventh Imam. After the death of al-Sadiq in the year ۱۴۸/۷۶۵ the Nawusiyya group held that he was al-Qa'im al-Mahdi and that he did not die but went into occultation(۱).

The Waqifa group applied this title to the seventh Imam Musa alKazim (d. ۱۸۳/۷۹۹) and denied his death, contending that he was al-Qa'im al-Mahdi and that he would rise to fill the earth with justice after it had been filled with tyranny(۲).

Other Imamites held that the eleventh Imam al- 'Askari was al-Qa'im al-Mahdi,(۳) whereas the last important usage of this term was given to the Twelfth Imam, who became the magnate of the Imamites' hope in their struggle for justice and equity.

It is worth mentioning that all these claims relating to the eschatological usage of the term 'al-Mahdi' were based mainly on Prophetic traditions concerning a future restorer of Islam. Hence it is essential to discuss the traditions of the Prophet and the Imams, especially these traditions which concern the Twelfth Imam, so as to see their role in the question of his occultation.

۲. The Occultation of al-Qa'im al-Mahdi in the Qur'an

In Shi'ite exegesis many Qur'anic verses are regarded as references to the role of al-Qa'im and his occultation.

The most important is the following verse:

O, but I call to witness the planets, the stars which rise and set

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۱- N. Firaq, ۵۷; Kama'l, ۳۷.

۲- al-Hasani, Sirat al-A'imma al-Ithna 'Ashar (Beirut, ۱۹۷۷), ۳۷۰.

۳- Kama'l, ۴۰.

(al-Takweer, ۸۱:۱۵-۶)

According to Imam al-Baqir, this verse means that an Imam would go into occultation in the year ۲۶۰/۸۴۷; then he would reappear suddenly like a bright shooting star in the .(dark night(۱

:Ibn al-Furat, al-Kafi and al-Sadug interpret the following Qur'anic verse

Say: Have you thought: If (all) your water were to disappear into the earth, who then" (could bring you gushing water" (al-Mulk, ۶۱:۳۰

They maintain that this verse is a metaphor for the concealment of the Imam, whose .(presence among people is like the water they need to drink(۲

The Isma'ili writer Mansur al-Yaman (ca. ۴th century A. H.) agrees with al-Kulayni that some Qur'anic verses which apparently deal with the Day of Judgement actually concern the appearance of al-Qa'im after his occultation. According to al-Kulayni the verse

[And those who sincerely believe in the day of Judgement" [al-Mi'raj, ۷۰: ۲۶"

refers to those who believe in the reappearance of al-Qa'im(۳). Mansur al-Yaman :gives a similar esoteric interpretation of another verse

And of mankind are some who say, we believe in Allah and the Last Day, when they believe not. They think to beguile Allah and those who believe, but they beguile none [save themselves; but they perceive not. [al-Baqara, ۲: ۸-۹

Mansur al-Yaman states that the Last Day (al-Yawm al-Akhir) in this verse is the .("Commander of the Age" (Sahib al-Zaman), that is al-Qa'im al-Mahdi(۴

Al-Kulayni interprets many Qur'anic verses with the same kind of approach and links ,them to the future role of al-Qa'im al-Mahdi.' In his view

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.al-Kafi, I, ۳۴۱;Kama'l, ۳۲۵,۳۳۰; N. al-Ghayba, ۷۵ -۱

.Ibn al-Furat, al-Tafsir, quoted by al-Majlisi in Bihar, LI, ۵۰; Kama'l, ۳۵۱ -۲

.al-Kafi, VIII, ۲۸۷ -۳

.Ibn Hawshab, Kitab al-Kashf (London, Cairo, Bombay, ۱۹۵۲), ۶ -۴

when al-Qa'im reappears he will establish the political state of the "People of the House" (Ahl al-Bayt) that is, the Imams, upon the ruins of the state of inequity. This is al-Kulayni's esoteric commentary on the verse: "And say: The truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Surely falsehood is a vanishing thing." [Banu Isra'il, ۱۷: ۸۱](۱)

Al-Tusi follows in al-Kulani's footsteps in commenting on certain Qur'anic verses. :Take, for example, this passage

And We desired to show favour unto those who were oppressed in the earth, and to make them Imams and to make them the inheritors. And to establish them in the earth, and to show Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts that which they feared from them. [al-Qasas ۲۸: ۵-۶[

Al-Tusi holds that the above verses predict the establishment of the state of Justice by al-Qa'im al-Mahdi, who would inherit what had been in the possession of the wrong-doers(۲).

Other Imamite scholars maintain that the fifth Imam, al-Baqir, said that Allah's promise of victory to an Imam from the People of the House is mentioned explicitly in :the following verse

And verily We have have written in the scripture (al-Zabur), after the Reminder My righteous slaves will inherit the earth. [al-Anbiya', ۲۱:۱۰۵](۳)

Other verses have also been interpreted by the Imamites to be connected with the role of al-Qa'im, after his rising from occultation, such as the verse:

Allah has promised such of you as believe and do good works that He will surely make them to succeed (the present rulers) in

.al-Kafi, VIII, ۲۸۷ -۱

.al-Tusi, al-Tibyan, VIII, ۱۱۴-۶ -۲

.al-Tusi al-Tibyan, VII, ۲۵۰; Sadr al-Din al-Sadr, al-Mahdi, (Tehran, ۱۳۵۸),۱۱ -۳

the earth even as He caused those who were before them to succeed (others); and He will surely establish for them their religion which he has approved for them, and will give them in exchange safety after their fear. They serve Me. They ascribe nothing as a partner unto Me. Those who disbelieve henceforth, they are the wrong [doers. [al-Nur, ۲۴: ۵۵

Al-Qummi and al-Tusi report that the People of the House mentioned that this verse concerns the Mahdi because he would live during his concealment in a state of fear, .(would appear after the removal of fear, and would certainly become victorious(۱

The traditions concerning the Twelfth Imam and his occultation .۳

A) The traditions concerning al-Qa'im al-Mahdi

There are many traditions attributed to the Prophet in the books of tradition concerning the identity of al-Mahdi, his family, his epithet (kunya) and his character. The conclusion of these numerous traditions is that al-Mahdi is a descendant of the sons of Fatima(۲), the daughter of the Prophet; and more particularly, that he is of the .progeny of her son al-Husayn

His colour is similar to that of the Arab, and his body is like the Israelite, and his name and kunya are similar to,the name and kunya of the Prophet(۳). Moreover some traditions claim that the Prophet said that al-Mahdi's father's name is like the name of .the Prophet's grandson, al-Hasan. Below are a number of these traditions

i) We, the family of 'Abd al-Muttalib, are the Masters of the inhabitants of Paradise: I, .(Hamza, Ja'far, 'Ali, al-Hasan, al-Husayn and al-Mahdi(۴

ii) Al-Mahdi is from my progeny. His

Ali b. Ibrahim al-Qummi Tafsir al-Qummi (Najaf, ۱۳۸۷), II, ۶۸, ۸۴, ۲۰۵-۶; T. al-Ghayba, ' -۱
۱۲۰; al-Tusi, al-Tibyan, VIII, ۴۰۴
.Ibn Maja, Sunan, II, ۵۱۹; Abu Dawud, al-Sunan, II, ۲۰۸ -۲
al-Tirmidhi, IX, ۷۴, ۷۵; and the Cairo edition, IV, ۵۰۵-۶ -۳
.Ibn Maja, Sunan, II, ۱۳۶۸ -۴

name is similar to mine and his epithet is similar to mine. In his physique and character he looks exactly like me. He will be in a state of occultation and there will be confusion (Hayra) in which people will wander about. Then he will come forth like a sharp, shooting star to fill the earth with justice and equity as it was filled before with injustice and inequity.(۱)

iii) Al-Mahdi is from my family ('itra) from the sons of Fatima. It is worth mentioning that this tradition was reported on the authority of Umm Salama by 'Ali b. Nufayl, who died in ۱۲۵/۷۴۲.(۲)

iv) On the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, the Prophet is reported to have said, "How shall Allah destroy a nation whose beginning is myself, whose end is Jesus and whose very centre is al-Mahdi, who will be from my family?(۳)

v) The name of al-Mahdi's father is similar to the name of my son al-Hasan.(۴)

The conclusion of Osman concerning these traditions seems to be rather forced. "All these hadiths are weak and contradictory (mutadarib), therefore their attribution to the Prophet Muhammad is to be very much doubted.(۵)

For the use of the epithet al-Mahdi by numerous Islamic groups, particularly the Zaydites, in their struggle for power during the Umayyad period shows that these traditions were well-known among the Muslims of that period. Moreover, many traditionists from different Islamic sects transmitted these traditions before the downfall of the Umayyads in ۱۳۲/۷۴۹, and later they were collected in

Kama'l, ۲۸۶-۷. Al-Tirmidhi mentioned the same tradition on the authority of Ibn - ۱ Mas'ud without any details concerning the occultation of the Mahdi. Al Tirmidhi, IV, .۵۰۵-۶; al-Darimi, Sunan, IV, ۱۵۱

.Mizan, III, ۱۶۰; Ibn Maja, Sunan, II, ۱۳۶۸; al-Musannaf, XI, ۳۷۲ -۲

.al-Thalabi, 'Ara'is al-Majalis, ۳۶۳; al-Kanji, op.cit., ۳۲۷ -۳

.al-Haythami, al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa, ۱۰۰ -۴

.Osman, Mahdism in Islam, Ph.D. Thesis (Edinburgh, ۱۹۷۶), ۲۰۴ -۵

.(the books of tradition (hadith

The earliest of these books was Kitab Sulaym b. Qays, attributed to Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilali, who died between the years ۸۰-۹۰/۶۹۹-۷۰۸. He reports many Prophetic traditions .(concerning al-Mahdi, his occultation and his reappearance(۱

It appears from these two points that Osman's judgement is somewhat hasty, particularly if one takes into account the fact that Prophetic traditions regarding al-Mahdi were narrated by twenty-six companions of the Prophet. On their authority .(thirty-eight traditionists recorded these traditions in their collections of hadith(۲

The evidence suggests that from the earliest times in Islam there was a belief that the Prophet had given his followers a promise about a man from the progeny of al-Husayn, who would rise in arms in the future to purify Islam from innovation. But political rivalry amongst the Muslims encouraged some people to exploit this hope and to distort these Prophetic traditions in order to use them in their struggle for .(power(۳

These traditions only mention that al-Qa'im al-Mahdi will be from the progeny of the Prophet. But there are also other traditions attributed to the Prophet which state that .al-Mahdi will, in fact, be the Twelfth Imam

,It is true that Montgomery Watt objects that

Until al-'Askari died on ۱st Jan. ۸۷۴, there was nothing to make people expect that the number of the Imams would be limited to twelve or that the Twelfth would go into

(occultation. It follows the theory of the twelve Imams was worked out after ۸۷۴.(۴

Nevertheless, there

p: ۲۸

Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilali, Kitab Sulaym b. Qays (Najaf, n.d.), ۵۶, ۱۵۹-۶۲. Although this -۱ book has received some criticism with regard to its authenticity, a careful examination of its contents which show that it was regarded as a source by such writers as al-Kulayni in al-Kafi, al-Mas'udi in al-Tanbih wa-l-Ishraf and al-Nu'mani in Kitab al-Ghayba.

Abd al-Muhsin al-'Abbad, 'Aqidat Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Athar fi al-Mahdi al Muntazar,' -۲ al-Hadi (Qumm, ۱۹۷۱) I, part ۱, ۳۳-۵; al-Tabsi, al-Shi'a wa-l-Raja (Najjaf, ۱۹۶۶), ۳۶-۵۴.

For the Umayyad and the 'Abbasid use of the epithet al-Mahdi so as to gain political -۳ success, see al-Ishfahani, al-Aghani, XVI, ۸۸; al-Darimi, Sunan, IV, ۱۵۲.

Watt, The Majesty that is Islam, ۱۶۹-۱۷۰ -۴.

is ample proof that traditions claiming a-lQa'im would be the Twelfth descendant of the Prophet were in circulation before ۸۷۴. It is thus necessary to throw light upon these traditions, which were,transmitted by Sunnites and Zaydites as well as Imamites, so that one can see to what extent these traditions were used by the Imamite scholars to support the belief that the Twelfth Imam had not died but was in a state of occultation.

(B) The traditions of the Sunnites (Ahl al-Hadith

The Sunnite books of tradition report three Prophetic traditions pertaining to the twelve Imams who would be the successors of the Prophet. These were narrated on the authority of seven companions of the Prophet, namely Jabir b. Samura, 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud, Anas b. Malik, 'Umar b. al-Khattab, Wa'ila b. Asqa', 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar and Abu Hurayra.

i) Jabir b. Samura narrates that he heard the Prophet say, "There will be after me twelve Amirs. "Then he mentioned something which I did not hear, so I asked my

"(father, who was sitting beside me, who said, "All of whom will be from Quraysh.(۱

ii) 'Umar b. al-Khattab reports that he heard the Prophet say, "The Imams (al-A'imma) after me will be twelve, all of whom will be from Quraysh.(۲"

iii) 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud was once reciting the Qur'an in the mosque in Iraq, when a young man came and asked him if the Prophet had informed them about the number of his successors. Ibn Mas'ud replied, "The Prophet informed us that his successors will be twelve caliphs,

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۱- al-Bukhari, al-Sahih (Cairo, ۱۳۵۵), IV, ۱۷۵; M. Sahih, III, ۱۹۰-۳; al-Tirmidhi, IV, ۵۰۱; Ibn Hanbal, al-Musnad (Cairo, ۱۳۱۳), V, ۲۹۴.

۲- al-Kharraz, Kifayat al-Athar, quoted by al-Galbaygani, Muntakhab al-Athar, ۲۸.

"(whose number is similar to the number of the leaders (al-nuqaba) of Banu Isra'il.(۱

These traditions have been related by the traditionists and considered authentic. Ibn Hanbal narrates the first with thirty-four chains of transmitters (sanad), all of which are on the authority of Jabir b. Samura(۲), although there are slight differences in the versions. Some of the narrators used the words Ami'r and Khalifa instead of Imam.

But these traditions, as reported by the Sunnites, indicate only that the Prophet would be succeeded by twelve successors; none reveals that the Twelfth would go into occultation, nor that he would be al-Qa'im al-Mahdi. But the Zaydite and the Imamite narrators relate the same traditions with phrases which indicate that the Twelfth Imam would be al-Qa'im al-Mahdi(۳).

C) The Twelfth Imam in the Zaydite traditions

The Zaydite sect, the Jarudiyya, narrate many traditions attributed to the Prophet and al-Baqir concerning the political role of the Twelfth Imam. One of their distinguished scholars in Kufa was Abu Said 'Abbad b. Ya'qub al-Rawajini al-'Asfari (d. ۲۵۰/۸۶۴)(۴). He wrote a book entitled Kitab Akhbar al-Mahdi(۵).

Al-Dhahabi reports that ‘Abbad was a Rafidite propagandist, and was awaiting the rise of al-Mahdi in the near future. He used to carry a sword, and once said that he kept his sword ready in order to fight for al-Mahdi(۶). It is worth mentioning that ‘Abbad held this view before the occultation of the Twelfth Imam in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴, since he died in ۲۵۰/۸۶۴.(۷) He reports three Prophetic traditions concerning the Twelfth Imam. :Below are two of them

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p: ۳۰

.Ibn Hanbal, al-Musnad, I, ۳۹۸; al-Karajuki, al-Istibsar, ۱۲ -۱

.Ibn Hanbal, al-Musnad, V, ۸۶-۹۰, ۹۲-۱۰۱, ۱۰۶-۸ -۲

.N. al-Ghayba, ۴۸-۹; Kama'l, ۲۷۰-۳ -۳

For the biography of ‘Abbad and his Shi’ite sympathies see Ibn Hibban, al Majruhin, -۴ .II, ۱۷۲; Mizan, II ۳۷۹-۸۰, IV, ۱۴۹; al-Najashi, ۲۲۵

al-Hilli, al-Idah, ۱۷۶; al-Galbaygani, op. cit., ۵ -۵

Mizan, II, ۳۷۹-۸۰ -۶

.Ibn Hibban, al-Majruhin, II, ۱۷۲ -۷

The Prophet is believed to have said, "From my descendants there will be eleven leaders [who will be] noble, receivers of tradition [and] possessed of knowledge, the last of whom will be ‘al-Qa’im bil-Haqq' who will fill it [i.e. the world] with justice, just as .(it was filled with tyranny(۱

ii) The Prophet is reported to have said: "I and eleven of my descendants and you, O 'Ali, are the axis of the earth, that is, its tent pegs and its mountains. By us Allah has secured the world so that it will not sink with its people. For when the eleventh of my .(descendants has died the world shall sink with its people without warning(۲

These traditions along with other sayings predicting the historical circumstances and the signs which would precede the rise of al-Qa’im al-Mahdi were used by the Shi’a in their struggle for power. This can be seen in the events of the general ‘Alid uprising which occurred in ۲۵۰-۱/۸۶۴-۵, when many Shi’ites applied the Prophetic traditions

concerning the signs of the rise of al-Qa'im al-Mahdi to the historical circumstances surrounding this revolt. Ibn 'Uqda (d. ٣٣٣/٩٤٤) reports that al-Sadiq said:

A man from the People of the House of the Prophet will rise in arms in Mecca holding a white standard in his hand: the Euphrates will become dry, and, at the same time, a group of people, whose eyes are small, will advance towards you from the East and will force you to leave your houses. Moreover, the

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١- al-'Asfari, Asl Abu Said al-'Asfari, Ms. f. ٢-١.

٢- al-'Asfari, Asl Abu Said al-'Asfari, f. ٢. Al-Kulayni includes these traditions in his work al-Hujja but, according to his transmission, the Prophet mentioned twelve Imams from his descendants and not eleven. Thus the number of the Imams along with 'Ali would-be thirteen. Because al-Kulayni transmitted his narration on the authority of al-'Asfari, it appears that the latter's version is more accurate. al-Kafi, I, ٥٣٣-٤.

graves of your dead will be opened and predatory animals will attack your houses. Afterwards a fair-complexioned man will install a chair in Mecca calling people to curse 'Ali b. Abi Talib, and killing many people, but he will be killed on the same day.(١)

According to 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. al-Qasim al-Kharraz (d. ca. ٢٥٠/٨٦٤) all these signs occurred during the revolt of Yahya b. 'Umar in ٢٥٠/٨٦٤. As a result, some Shi'ites, particularly the Jarudiyya, believed that the leader of this revolt, Yahya b. 'Umar, was himself al-Qa'im al-Mahdi.(٢)

D) The Twelfth Imam in the Imamite traditions

point

The Imamite traditionists are distinguished from the Sunnites and the Zaydites by their claim that the Twelfth Imam mentioned in the Sunnite and the Zaydite traditions is in fact Muhammad the son of the eleventh Imam al- 'Askari, and that he is al-Qa'im al-Mahdi. Moreover they have written in more detail about his occultation, and his

political role, the signs which would precede his reappearance and the social and political conditions which might pave the way for it.

a. The traditions concerning the Twelfth Imam

The Prophetic traditions concerning the twelve Imams related by the Sunnite and the Zaydite traditionists were also narrated by the Imamites(۳).

They applied these traditions to their twelve Imams and added traditions of the Imams themselves which indicate explicitly that the successor of the eleventh Imam was al-Qa'im. The traditions attributed to the Prophet do not indicate explicitly that al-Qa'im would be the successor of al-'Askari, the eleventh Imam, whereas the sayings of the Imams do.

The earliest reference to a Prophetic tradition

p: ۳۲

۱- Ibn 'Uqda, Kitab al-Malahim, f. ۷۴-۵.

۲- EI۱, art. "al-Mahdi", ۱۱۲.

۳- N. al-Ghayba, ۷,۴۸,۵۷-۶۱, ۳۱, ۴۵; al-Saduq, Khisal, ۴۳۶-۴۵; 'Uyun, ۳۲۳, al Karajaki, al-Istibsar, Ms. f. ۱۱-۱۲; al-Kafi, I, ۵۳۴; al-Tabsi al-Shi'a wa-l-Raja (Najaf, ۱۹۶۶), ۱۲۹-۳۰; Kama'l, ۲۷۹.

concerning the Twelfth Imam is recorded by the Imamite traditionists on the authority of Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilali. He was a companion of five Imams, 'Ali, al-Hasan, al-Husayn, 'Ali b. al-Husayn and al-Baqir, and died in ۹۰/۷۰۱.(۱) The Imamites regard his work as the first Shi'ite collection of Hadith(۲).

He reports numerous narrations concerning the twelve Imams and the political role of the last Imam. The first of these narrations is attributed to a Christian monk who met 'Ali after his return from the battle of Siffin. He informed him that he had found in the Gospels that the successors of the Prophet Muhammad would be twelve; the last of them would fill the world with justice, and Jesus would perform the prayer behind

him(۳).

All the other narrations in Sulaym's work are attributed to the Prophet. The most important of these is quoted on the authority of the companions ‘Ali, ‘Abd Allah b. Ja’far al-Tayyar, Salman al-Farisi, Abu al-Haytham b. al-Tayhan, Khuzayma b. Thabit, ‘Ammar b. Yasir, Abu Dharr, al-Miqdad and Abu Ayyub. They narrated that the Prophet gathered his companions together at Ghadir Khumm and said to them:

O people, the legal power (al-wilaya) is granted only to ‘Ali b. Abi Talib and the trustees from my progeny, the descendants of my brother ‘Ali. He will be the first, and his two sons, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, will succeed him consecutively. They will not separate themselves from the Qur'an until they return to Allah.(۴)

Sulaym adds that the Commmander of

۱- al-Barqi, Kitab al-Rijal, ۴,۷,۸,۹.

۲- Ibn al-Nadim, al-Fihrist, I, ۵۳۵; N. al-Ghayba, ۴۷.

۳- al-Hilali, Kitab Sulaym b. Qays, ۱۳۵-۷.

۴- Ibid., ۱۰۹-۱۰, ۱۲۴-۵, ۱۶۵-۶, ۲۰۱, ۲۰۴-۶.

the Faithful, ‘Ali, told him, "O brother, son of Hilal, the Mahdi of my nation is Muhammad, who shall fill the earth with justice and equity as it was filled with tyranny and injustice. I know who will pay the oath of allegiance to him.(۱)"

Sulaym states that he met al-Hasan and al-Husayn in Medina after the assassination of their father, 'Ali, and related to them this tradition on 'Ali's authority.

They confirmed that they had also heard it from the Prophet. Sulaym adds that he informed ‘Ali b. al-Husayn, the fourth Imam, in the presence of his son al-Baqir about this tradition, and they also confirmed its authenticity. Moreover Abban b. Abi ‘Ayyash reports that he met al-Baqir during the rite of pilgrimage and mentioned Sulaym's tradition to him, and that he confirmed its authenticity(۲).

But al-Mas'udi doubts the authenticity of this tradition claiming that this tradition was transmitted only through Sulaym(3).

Despite the fact that this tradition is related on the authority of Sulaym b. Qays by many Imamite scholars, such as al-Kulayni, al-Nu'mani, and al-Tusi (4), it was related and confirmed by others as well(5). In addition al-Saduq relates the above tradition on the authority of 'A1i(6),and he narrates another prophetic tradition on the authority of Abd Allah b. 'Abbas:

I am the master of the Prophets and 'Ali the master of my trustees, of whom there will be twelve; the first one is 'Ali, and the last is al-Qa'im.(7)

Moreover the Imamite scholars relate numerous traditions attributed to their Imams, which

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1- al-Hilali, op. cit. 94; Kama'l, 285.

2- al-Hilali,op. cit. 95.

3- al-Mas'udi, al-Tanbih, 198.

4- al-Kafi, I, 529; N. al-Ghayba, 38; 46, 274-8; T. al-Ghayba, 99.

5- al-Tirmidhi, IV, 505-6; al-Darimi, Sunan, IV, 151.

6- Kama'l, 259-61.

7- Kama'l, 280. Another narration has been narrated by the companion Jabir al Ansari, which confirms that al-Mahdi would be from the progeny of 'Ali b. al Husayn (al-Tusi, al-Amali II, 251), but al-Sahib b. 'Abbad doubts its authenticity; Nusrat, Madhahib al-Zaydiyya, 208-9.

confirm that the Twelfth Imam will be al-Qa'im al-Mahdi (1). It is worth noting that al-Hadrami (fl. 3rd/9th century) reports a tradition which gives the Imam who will rise in arms the epithet al-Qa'im(2).

At the same time other narrations employ the epithet al-Mahdi, particularly in the works of al-Saffar (d. 290/902)(3).

The use of these two terms caused such confusion amongst the followers of al-Jawad that some were not sure whether al-Qa'im and al-Mahdi were the same individual or not. Therefore, according to al Saduq, al-Jawad was reported as having said that al-Qa'im is from "us" and that he would be al-Mahdi; he must be awaited by his followers during his occultation and obeyed at his rising and that he would be his .(descendant in the third generation(۴

The Imamites of the fourth/ninth century called the Twelfth Imam al-Qa'im al-Mahdi. Al-Mufid states that he was called al-Mahdi because he would guide people to a .(forgotten dogma and law(۵

b. The political role of al-Qa'im

It has already been pointed out that the Imams from 'Ali b. al-Husayn onwards adopted publicly a quiescent policy towards the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids. Accordingly, they stressed the propagation of their teachings, which they expected, would result in religious and political awareness among the people and would prepare .the ground for the task of al-Qa'im

Al-Nu'mani reports that al-Baqir advised his partisan Abu al-Jarud to keep quiet at home, and not to implicate himself in the militant activities of some 'Alids against the Umayyads, since the Umayyad state had a natural

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.al-Kafi, I, ۵۳۱-۳; al-Irshad, ۳۹۳; Dala'il, ۲۳۶-۸, ۲۴۹-۵۱ -۱

al-Hadrami, Asl Ja'far b. Muhammad b. Shurayh, Ms. f. ۳۲b; for other similar - ۲ .traditions see al-Kafi, VIII, ۱۶۷, ۵۳۶; Ibn Tawus, al-Igbal, ۴۳۱

al-Saffar, Basa'ir al-Darajat, f. ۱۹b, ۴۹b; for similar traditions see al-Kafi, I, ۲۴۳, ۲۸۱, -۳ .۳۳۸, ۳۷۲, ۴۱۱, ۴۹۶, ۵۳۶

Kama'l, ۳۷۷. Al-Tusi reports another narration attributed to the tenth Imam who - ۴ stated explicitly that the Twelfth Imam would be al-Mahdi (T al-Ghabya, ۹۲). However, it might be that such narrations were not common among the Imamites. When the traditionist al-Fadl b. Shadhan (d. ۲۶۰/۸۷۴), talks about the role of al-Qa'im al-Mahdi, he

does not attach this epithet to the Twelfth Imam; Ibn Shadhan, al-Idah, ۴۷۵-۶
.al-Irshad, ۴۱۱; see also al-San'ani, al-Musannaf, XI, ۴۷۲ -۵

lifespan and the moment of its downfall had not yet come(۱). He added that any 'Alid who rebelled against tyranny before the rise of al-Qa'im would inevitably fail(۲).

Al-Sadiq and the later Imams followed the same policy. They ordered their followers not to allow despair to find a place in their hearts and to wait for the rise of al-Qa'im in the near future(۳). This policy enabled the Imamites to spread their doctrine and at the same time to organize themselves - during the period between ۱۳۲-۲۶۰/۷۴۹-۸۷۴ - into a well-established political and financial organization (al-Wikala).

It seems probable that this underground organization was preparing for the rise of al-Qa'im. For they expected his rising(۴) and placed important political and relgious duties upon his shoulders.

Several narrations suggest that the quiescent policy of the Imams was established after their followers caused two abortive rebellions. According to al-Kulayni, al-Sadiq once said:

This matter (al-Amr), that is, the endeavour to reach power, was hidden until it reached the hands of the Kaysaniyya. They revealed it on the roads and circulated it among the villagers of al-Sawad(۵).

According to al-Numani the Imamites endeavoured to rise in arms twice, first in the year ۷۰/۶۸۹ and second in the year ۱۴۰/۷۵۸, but their followers spoiled their plans by revealing the name of their leader to their foes(۶), an act which resulted in the arrest or the assassination of the Imams. In this connection a conversation between al-Baqir and his partisan 'Abd Allah by 'Ata al-Wasiti is revealing.

.See Chapter II -۱

N. al-Ghayba, ۱۰۴, ۱۰۷, ۱۵۹; al-Hadrami, op. cit., f. ۴۸a; al-Kafi, VIII, ۲۶۴ -۲

.N. al-Ghayba, ۱۰۶-۷; al-Kafi, VIII, ۲۶۴, ۳۱۰ -۳
.N. al-Ghayba, ۹۴, ۹۶ -۴
.al-Kafi, II, ۲۲۳ -۵
N. al-Ghayba, ۱۵۸ -۶

:Al-Wasiti said to the Imam

You have many followers in Iraq and there is no one among your family who has the merit for leadership but you. So why do you not rise in arms? Al-Baqir replied: O 'Abd Allah, do not listen to the masses, because none of us has his name mentioned by the people nor a hand pointing at him as the Imam, without soon facing inevitable death. So search for him whose birth is concealed from the people, because he will be the (one who will manage such an affair.(۱

:Moreover al-Sadiq was reported to have said

This matter (the rising in arms) was vested in me, but Allah delayed it; He shall do with .(my progeny whatever He wants(۲

These sayings indicate that the Imams had suffered the consequences of revealing the fixed dates of their militant endeavours to reach power. Hence the later Imams did not reveal explicitly to their followers which Imam would be al-Qa'im with the sword. At the same time they encouraged their followers to follow their instructions(۳), for this would pave the way for one of the Imams to reach power .under the title of al-Qa'im

Several traditions reveal that the establishment of al-Qa'im's political state will occur through the "natural" course of events. A Prophetic tradition states that a group of people from the east will start underground activities and pave the way for the .(installation of al-Mahdi by military means(۴

The latter will struggle for power without any miraculous aid and

.al-Kafi, I, ٣۴٢; Kama’l, ٣٢۵ -١

.T. al-Ghayba, ٢٧٨ -٢

.al-Kafi, I, ٣۶٨-٩; Bihar, LII, ٢١٢ -٣

.Ibn Maja, Sunan, II, ١٣۶۶; al-Kanji, op. cit., ٣١۴ -۴

will face difficulties and opposition against the propogation of his teachings, similar to the opposition which the Prophet faced with Quraysh(١). Furthermore he will not take .(any militant action unless he has at least ١٠,٠٠٠ partisans(٢

According to al-Baqir the main goal of al-Qa’im will be to establish an Islamic state and to apply Islamic law as it was revealed to the Prophet. Al-Sadiq asserts that he will follow the Prophet's policy by eliminating and demolishing all the innovations which derive from a situation of ignorance (al-Jahiliyya) and apply Islam in a new .(form(٣

Other narrations indicate that he will apply the law of David and Solomon along with the Islamic law(۴) and apply the rules of the Torah to the Jews and the rules of the Gospel to the Christians. According to al-Nu'mani, his state will include, in addition to .(the Islamic lands, the territories of Rum, Sind, India and China(۵

Some functions attributed to al-Qa’im indicate the unrest and disappointment felt by the Imamites in the face of the political and economic situation of the time. Al-Fadl b. Shadhan (d. ٢۶٠/٨٧٣) and al-Kulayni report that al-Qa’im will rise with the sword as .God's avenger against those who caused troubles to ‘Ali and his wife Fatima

He would also take vengeance against those who were responsible for the suffering of the Imams and their followers(۶), particularly against those who assassinated al-Husayn. Al-Sadiq considered al-Husayn's assassination the main reason for the rise of .(al-Qa’im as an avenger(٧

Other functions of al-Qa’im

١ - al-Kafi VIII, ٢٢٥; N. al- Ghayba, ١٠۶, ١۶٠; al-Tabsi quotes a statement from Ibn A'tham attributed to 'Ali which states that the partisans of al-Mahdi will start their activities from al-Talqan in Khurasan; al-Shi'a wa-l-Raj a, ١۴١.

٢- Kama'l, ۶۵۴

٣ - N. al-Ghayba, ١٠۴,١٢٢,١٢٣. Al-Saffar reports that al-Qa'im will apply Islamic law according to the books of 'Ali which he related directly from the Prophet; Basa'ir al-Darajat, f. ١٢۴.

۴- al-Saffar, op. cit., f. ۵٠; al-Kafi, I, ٢٩٨.

۵- N. al-Ghayba, ١٢۴, ١٢۵-۶; al-Tabsi, op. cit., ٢١٨; 'Ali b. Tawus, al-Malahim wa-l Fitan (Najaf, ١٣۶٧), ۵٣; Najm al-Din al-'Askari, al-Mahdi al-Maw'ud al Muntazar (Beirut, ١٩٧٧), II, ١٠.

۶- Ibn Shadhan, Ithbat al-Raja, quoted by al-Tabsi, op. cit., ٢٢١; al-Kafi, VIII, ٢٣٣; al-Saduq. 'Ilal, II, ٢۶٧; al-Majlisi includes in his work al-Bihar a book attributed to al-Mufaddil b. 'Umar which deals with the occurrence which will take place after the rise of al-Qa'im; Bihar, LIII, ١-٣٨; Dala'il, ٢٣٩, ٢۶٠; N. al Ghayba, ١۴٨.

٧- al-Kafi I, ۴۶۵; al-Tusi, al-Amali, II, ٣٣; al-Saduq, 'Ilal, ٢٢٩; Ibn Tawus, al Iqbal, ١٨۶.

depict the political annoyance of the Imams towards the allegiance of the Arabs, and especially towards the clan of Quraysh who had monopolized political authority since the death of the Prophet. Al Nu'mani mentions a tradition attributed to Imam al-Sadiq: "When al-Qa'im rises he will deal with the Arabs and Quraysh only by the sword(١).

The Imamites also vested al-Qa'im with another task which reveals their dissatisfaction with the economic system of the 'Abbasid state. According to al-Himyari, al-Baqir stated that when al-Qa'im rose allthe feudal systems would be abolished(٢).

Al-Kulayni agrees with al Himyari and adds that al-Qa'im, after carrying out this operation, may allow his partisans to administer and cultivate the lands with the condition that they pay the legal land-tax(٣).

In the light of these hopes and the repeated failure of the Zaydite uprisings, as had been expected by the Imams, the Imamites concentrated all their hopes on the

uprising of al-Qa'im, whose state had been awaited since the time of al-Baqir(۴). Al-Nu'mani reports that when tie 'Abbasid revolution broke out in Khurasan and black baners were raised, Abu Bakr al-Hadrami and Abban went to the Imam al-Sadiq, and asked his opinion about participating in the revolution.

He warned them against it saying: "When you see us follow a man, then you must join us with weapons."(۵)

Although the Imam did not reveal the identity of the man to be followed, he confirmed that he would struggle for power by militant means and eliminate the rule of his opponents(۶).

۱- N. al-Ghayba, (the second editon), ۳۰۸, ۳۱۹.

۲- al-Himyari, op. cit., quoted by al-Galbagani, op. cit., ۳۰۵.

۳- al-Kafi, I, ۴۰۷-۸.

۴- N. al-Ghayba, ۱۰۳.

۵- N. al-Ghayba, ۱۰۵

۶- al-Kafi, I, ۲۴۰, ۲۸۱, ۳۷۰-۲. Di'bil the poet recited a line of poetry concerning the militant role of al-Qa'im in the presence of al-Rid'a; the latter confirmed this by saying that al-Qa'im would be from the progeny of al-Husayn. Di'bil, Diwan. ۷۳,۷۶; Kama'l, ۳۲۷-۴.

It appears that because of the militant role of al-Qa'im the Imams refrained from giving any explicit statement of his identity. However, they did indicate that since the rulers, first the Umayyads and then the 'Abbasids, had reached power by "natural" means, their fall would also occur by "natural" means.

There is a good deal of evidence to indicate that some of the Imams would have taken militant action if they had had strong and faithful partisans. But they delayed this task indefinitely until the intellectual activites of their followers could bear fruit and be converted into a political awareness which might enable one of the Imams to gain power by militant means.

The Imams also wanted their partisans to be more optimistic in gaining immediate success, and not to leave the task of propagation of their teachings to al-Qa'im, whose military uprising relied on the outcome of the activities of the Imamites themselves. Finally, it seems most likely that the uprising of the Imam who would be al-Qa'im, was later attributed to the Twelfth Imam, because the Imamite propaganda reached a developed, political stage during the life-time of the Tenth and the eleventh Imams, and this might have enabled the Twelfth Imam to reach power.

c. The signs of the rise of al-Qa'im

The early Imamite traditionists delineated five signs which would precede the rise of al-Qa'im al-Mahdi: first, the rise of al-Yamani, then the rise of al-Sufyani, thirdly the assassination of the Pure Soul (al-Nafs al-Zakiyya) in Mecca only fifteen days before the rise of alQa'im, fourthly an

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outcry in the morning from the sky in the name of al-Qa'im, and finally the sinking of an army into the earth (al-Bayda') during its march on Mecca(۱).

Despite the fact that al-Nu'mani, al-Saduq and al-Tusi differ as to the chronological occurrence of these signs, they all agree that they will occur in the same year(۲).

It seems that the delineation of these signs along with the expectations of the Imamites and al-Jarudiyya that al-Qa'im al Mahdi would rise in the near future(۳) caused the 'Abbasid authorities to be suspicious, since some of these signs were connected with their regime and indicated that al-Qa'im's uprising was directed mainly against them. The fact that the Imams had the 'Abbasids in mind can be seen in the discussion between al-Rid'a, the eighth Imam, and his adherent al-Hasan b. al-Jahm(۴), who said to him:

"May Allah make you prosper! The people are saying that al Sufyani will rise after the fall of the 'Abbasids." Al-Rid'a said: "They lie. He will rise while they are still in power.(۵)"

This statement has been confirmed in other traditions attributed to al-Sadiq. For :example his companion Ya'qub b. al-Sarraj asked him

When will your Shi'a gain their release from suffering?" He replied, "When conflict" occurs amongst the 'Abbasids, and their power begins to decline. Then their partisans and their subjects will be encouraged to threaten the authorities. Thereafter al-Sufyani will rise from the West, while the Yamani will advance from the East, until they both reach Kufa, where

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۱- N. al-Ghayba, ۱۳۴, ۱۳۹-۴۰; Kama'l, ۶۴۹; T. al-Ghayba, ۲۸۶; al-Kafi, VIII, ۲۲۵, ۳۱۰.

۲- N. al-Ghayba, ۱۳۶; T. al-Ghayba, ۲۸۶; Bihar, LII, ۲۳۲.

۳- N. al-Ghayba, ۹۴.

۴- For his biography, see Ibn Dawud, Kitab al-Rijal, ۱۰۴.

۵- N. al-Ghayba, ۱۶۳-۴.

they will destroy the 'Abbasids. At the same time the Hasani will start his rebellion. Then the Master of this matter, al-Qa'im, shall advance from Medina towards Mecca "(to rebel.(۱

According to al-Nu'mani, al-Sadiq added that because of these events, the fall of the 'Abbasid regime was inevitable. Its fall would be similar to a piece of crockery dropped (from the hand of its possessor, which then splits into pieces."(۲

In the light of these statements attributed to the Imams it is clear that from the time of al-Sadiq onwards, the Imamites awaited the political uprising of one of their .(Imams, called al-Qa'im while the 'Abbasids were still in power(۳

Indeed the spread of these traditions caused the 'Abbasids to fear the Imams, who might have been behind some 'Alid revolts. Perhaps this is why the 'Abbasid caliphs became suspicious of the Imams. Even the caliph al-Mansur himself related a tradition on the authority of al-Baqir stating that al-Qa'im would be from the progeny .(of 'Ali(۴

He restricted the movements of al-Sadiq and his followers and made it a policy to discriminate against them. Moreover he invested his sucessor Muhammad with the epithet "alMahdi" (۱۵۸-۱۶۹/۷۷۵-۷۸۵) in order to turn the attention of his subjects from .(the ‘Alid family toward the family of ‘Abbas(۵

Despite the fact that the movements of the seventh Imam, Musa al-Kazim, were also restricted by the authorities, so that he died in prison(۶), the Shi’ite propaganda for the rise of an Imam in the name of

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.N. al-Ghayba, ۱۳۵, ۱۳۸, ۱۴۴-۵; al-Kafi, VIII, ۲۲۴-۵ -۱

.N. al-Ghayba, ۱۳۷; Bihar, LII, ۲۳۲ -۲

.al-Hadrami,Kitab Ja’far b. Shurayh, f. ۳۹ -۳

.al-Kafi, VIII, ۲۰۹-۲۱۰; al-Irshad, ۴۰۴ -۴

It is reported that the Prophet said, "The Mahdi is from my progeny. His name is -۵ similar to mine" (al-Tirmidhi'. IV, ۵۰۵). According to Abu Dawud, the Prophet also added, "And his father's name is similar to my father's name" (Abu Dawud, al-Sunan, IV, ۱۰۶-۷). According to the last phrase the name of al-Mahdi is Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allah. Perhaps al-Mansur took this point into account when he called his son, ."Muhammad al-Mahdi" (al-Bidaya, X, ۸۹). For a full account see Osman, op. cit., ۲۶۶-۹

.See Chapter II -۶

al-Qa’im and al-Mahdi spread on a wide scale, particularly after the rebellion of Ibn .Tabataba in ۱۹۹/۸۱۴

Probably because of this situation the caliph al-Ma’mun devised a new policy towards the eighth Imam al-Rid’a. He made overtures to him asking him to be his heir apparent. By this means he hoped to split the ‘Alids some of whom were in rebellion .(and to keep al-Rid’a within the ‘Abbasid palace under close watch(۱

Al-Ma’mun followed this same policy with the ninth Imam, al-Jawad, marrying him to his daughter Umm al-Fadl, and keeping him under house-arrest(۲). Thereafter house-arrest became the cornerstone of the policy of the caliphs towards the Imams. It

obliged the Imams to stress the idea of the occultation as the means the Imam would employ to avoid the ‘Abbasid restriction, which increased from the time of al-Mutawakkil onwards.

Because his agents discovered connections between the underground activities of the Imamite agents in Baghdad, Mada'in and Kufa and the Imam al-Hadi, al-Mutawakkil followed the policy of al-Ma’mun. He wrote to al-Hadi a letter full of kindness and courtesy asking him to come to Samarra where they could meet. Afterwards al-Hadi was summoned to the capital in ۲۳۳/۸۴۸,(۳)where he spent the rest of his life under surveillance.

As a result he was prevented from meeting most of his adherents. He was only able to meet a few of his associate agents (wukala) in secret(۴).

In fact al-Mutawakkil's policy managed to prevent the ‘Alids from rising in arms against his regime. However it

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۱- Ithbat, ۲۰۵.

۲- Ithbat, ۲۰۵.

۳- Ikhtiyar. ۶۰۳, ۶۰۷; al-Kafi, I, ۵۰۱-۲; T. al-Ghayba, ۲۲۶-۷.

۴- Ithbat, ۲۶۲.

failed to destroy the system of the Wikala or to end the underground activities of the Zaydites and the Imamites. These spread throughout the empire to the extent that they were capable of causing a revolt.

Between the years ۲۴۵-۲۶۰/۸۵۹-۸۷۴ the Imamite and Zaydite traditionists were relating traditions stating that al-Qa’im would be the Twelfth Imam and urging people to join his side when he rose. The Zaydite al-’Asfari (d. ۲۵۰/۸۶۴)(۱) and the Imamite Ahmad b. Khalid al-Barqi (d.۲۷۴-۸۰/۸۸۷-۹۳) both related such traditions. For example, in ۲۵۰/۸۶۴ al-Barqi passed on a narration attributed to ‘Ali b. Abi Talib and the Prophet al-Khidr, which states explicitly that al-Qa’im al-Mahdi would be the Twelfth Imam(۲).

The spread of such narrations encouraged the Imamites to expect the rise of al-Qa'im in the near future and to link his rising with 'Abbasid rule. Some of them applied these traditions along with others concerning the signs of the rise of al-Qa'im to the circumstances surrounding the 'Alid revolt which broke out in ۲۵۰/۸۶۴. Ibn 'Uqda relates that the leader of the rebellion, Yahya b. 'Umar, was expected to be al-Qa'im al-Mahdi, since all the signs concerning the rise of al-Qa'im al-Mahdi related by al-Sadiq occurred during the revolt(۳).

Although Yahya b. 'Umar died in ۲۵۰/۸۶۴, the 'Abbasids' fear increased because of the continuation of this revolt and al-Hasan b. Zayd's (۲۵۰-۲۷۰/۸۶۴-۸۸۴). success in establishing a Shi'ite state in Tabaristan. This fear is not surprising if one bears in mind the fact that there was a well-known

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۱- Kama'l, ۴۶. For examples, see al-'Asfari, Asl Abu Said al-'Asfari f. ۱-۲; Mizan, II, ۳۷۹-۸۰; Bihar, L, ۱۸۵; al-Kindi op. cit., ۲۲۹

۲- al-Kafi, I, ۵۲۶-۷, ۳۳۸.

۳- Ibn 'Uqda, Kitab al-Malahim, f. ۷۲. According to al-Mufid only the Zaydites denied the death of Yahya b. 'Umar and held that he was al-Mahdi (al-Fusul al-'Ashara, ۳۰). But incidents seem to indicate that there was a common belief among the Imamiyya and the Jarudiyya from the years ۲۴۵-۶۰ onwards that the Twelfth Imam would be al-Qa'im al-Mahdi, but they were not sure about his identity, and whether or not he would be the son of al-'Askari.

Prophetic tradition which stated, "A people will appear in the East who will pave the way for the Mahdi's rise to power."(۱)

This tradition, at that time, might seem to refer to the establishment of the 'Alid state in Tabaristan, which would prepare the way for the rise of al-Qa'im al-Mahdi. Other factors supported the 'Abbasid fears. According to al-Tabari, 'Abbasid spies discovered secret correspondence between the founder of the 'Alid state in Tabaristan, al-Hasan b. Zayd, and the nephew of Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Khalaf al-

.'Attar,(۲) a follower of the tenth Imam al-Hadi

Moreover many pure Imamites took part in the 'Alid revolt of ۲۵۰/۸۶۴, such as Muhammad b. Ma'ruf, who held the banner of the rebels in Mecca,(۳) and 'Ali b. Musa b. Isma'il b. Musa al-Kazim, who joined the rebels in al-Rayy and was arrested by the .(caliph al-Mu'tazz(۴

It seems that the 'Abbasid authorities linked these factors with the activities of al-Hadi. Therefore they imposed tight restrictions upon al-Hadi and his followers, and arrested prominent figures in Baghdad, such as Abu Hashim al-Ja'fari, and .(Muhammad b. 'Ali al-'Attar, and sent them to Samarra(۵

.(This campaign of arrest also included al-'Askari and Ja'far, al-Hadi's two sons(۶

Another reason the 'Abbasids' feared the position of al-Hadi and his successor, al-'Askari, is the traditions of both the Prophet and the Imams concerning the series of the twelve Imams, the last of whom would be al-Qa'im al-Mahdi. This series could 'only be interpreted as applying to the Imamites

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.Ibn Maja,al-Sunan, II, ۱۳۶۸ -۱

.Tabari, III, ۱۶۸۳ -۲

.Ibn 'Uqda, Kitab al-Malahim, f. ۷۳ -۳

.Muruj, VII, ۴۰۴ -۴

.Tabari, III, ۱۶۸۳-۴,al-Kafi, I, ۵۰۰ -۵

.T. al-Ghayba, ۱۴۱, ۲۲۶; al-Kafi, I, ۵۰۸ -۶

tenth Imam, al-Hadi, and his successor al'Askari. So it was plausible that the successor of the latter would be the Twelfth Imam, about whom so many traditions .were being related

Moreover further traditions, attributed to al-Hadi and al'Askari, themselves appeared around this period emphasizing the important political and religious role of al-'Askari's

.(son(1

For example, Abu Hashim al-Ja'fari (d. ۲۶۱/۸۷۵), the associate and follower of al-Hadi, ,reports the latter as having said

The successor after me is my son al-Hasan but what will you do with the successor" of my successor?" Al-Ja'fari said, "May Allah make me your sacrifice! Why?" The Imam said, "Because you will not see his physical body and it is not permissible for you to reveal his name." Al-Ja'fari said, "How shall we mention him?" Al-Hadi said, ("Say 'The proof [al-Hujja] is from the family of Muhammad.'(2

It seems from al-Kulayni's report that the Imamites considered al-Hadi's statement as applying to al-Qa'im. Moreover, they felt it explained a statement by the eighth Imam, al-Rid'a, who had said that the body of al-Qa'im would not be seen and his name would not be revealed.(3)" Perhaps al-Baqir and al-Jawad's interpretation of a Qur'anic verse, referred to on page ۱۵, may be linked with the above two statements. For as we have seen, he stated that an Imam would go into concealment in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴, .(and would later rise like a bright, shooting star in the dark night(4

On account of the spread of these Imamite traditions and the 'Alid underground ,activities

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.T. al-Ghayba, ۹۸ -۱

.Kama'l, ۳۸۱; al-Kafi, I, ۳۲۸, ۳۳۲-۳ -۲

.al-Kafi, I, ۳۳۳ -۳

.Kama'l, ۳۲۵,۳۳۰; al-Kafi, I, ۳۴۱ -۴

the eleventh Imam, al-Hasan al- 'Askari, was forced to stay in the capital under .(house-arrest and had to report to the 'Abbasid court twice a week(1

The authorities hoped that through these measures they would be able to prevent the .appearance of any danger from the Twelfth Imam

The Role of the Imams in the Shiite Underground Activities and their Influence upon the Evolution of the Ghayba

Al-Sadiq's Attitude towards the new Regime .۱

It appears that the members of the ‘Abbasid family who became part of the revolutionary movement against the Umayyads adhered to the belief, in common with the various groups of the Shi'a, that the first lawful caliph after the Prophet was .(‘Ali(۲), and that the caliphate must belong to the People of the House (Ahl al-Bayt

The ‘Abbdsids preached against the Umayyads by calling for reform and justice. They invited the people to rally around the most suitable person from the progeny of Muhammad (al-Da'wa li-l-Rid’a min Al Muhammad). Many Shi’ite thought that this slogan referred only to the descendants of Imam ‘Ali. Thus they joined the ‘Abbasid .(movement(۳

Some of the Shi'a, such as Abu Salama al-Khallal, reached high rank in the ‘Abbasid movement without cognizing the fact that the ‘Abbasids were the founders of the .movement, and they aimed to monopolize the caliphate for themselves

When the propagandists overthrew the Umayyads in ۱۳۲/۷۴۹, Abu Salama al-Khallal, having discovered the reality of the ‘Abbasid's goal, endeavoured to transfer the caliphate to the ‘Alids by corresponding with Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq, ‘Umar al-Ashraf and ‘Abd Allah al-Mahd, offering it to each of them, Imam Ja’far al-Sddiq rejected the offer bluntly by burning Abu

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۱- .T. al-Ghayba, ۱۳۹- ۱۴۰

۲- Ahmad b. Abi Ya’qub b. Widih al-Ya'qubi, Tarikh al-Ya’qubi (Najaf, ۱۹۶۴), III, ۹۰; Ibn Khaldun, al-’Ibar wa-diwan al-Mubtada wa-l-Khabar (Cairo, ۱۸۶۷ ۷۰), III, ۱۷۳, Tabari, .III, ۳۳-۴, ۳۷; al-Hilali, op.cit., ۱۸۶

۳- Ahmad Ibrahim al-Sharif, al-’Alan al-Islamif al-’Asral-’Abbasi (Cairo, ۱۹۶۷) ۱۹-۲۵; Watt, The Majesty that was Islam, ۲۸-۳۰, ۹۵-۸. According to al-Najashi, amongst the

Imamites who participated in the 'Abbasid propaganda was Yaqlin b. Musa, who was .their propagandist in Kufa; al-Najashi, ٢٠٩

Salama's letter, and he warned ‘Umar al-Ashraf and ‘Abd Allah al-Mahd against .(accepting it(١

Al-Sadiq had already held a secret meeting with the leading personalities of the ‘Abbasid family, such as al-Saffah and al-Mansur at al-Abwa', near Medina, around the year ١٢٠/٧٣٧, to discuss the situation of the People of the House (Ahl al-Bayt). At this meeting the attendants wanted to form an underground collusion to bring about .the downfall of the Umayyads

A proposal also was made to support the Hasanid claims put forward by ‘Abd Allah al-Mahd on behalf of his son Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya(٢), but al-Sadiq refused to have anything to do with it. Although the ‘Abbasids present at this meeting made a nominal pledge to Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, al-Sadiq seems to have been aware of the possibility that their involvement with the revolutionaries, particularly the Kaysaniyya or its Hashimiyya branch; would be successful and that they would .replace the Umayyads

Also al-Sadiq knew he was the true divinely appointed Imam of the Muslims and he achieved the Imamate by the testament of his father, Imam al-Baqir. Thus people should rally around him to recover his right in the caliphate. Al-Sadiq's view did not please the ‘Abbasids, so, they carried out their underground activities against the .Umayyads without his participation

When the ‘Abbasids succeeded in seizing the reins of power in ١٣٢/٧٤٩ they were naturally aware of the danger from their kinsmen, the ‘Alids, whose claims to succession would be greater than their own if ‘Ali's right to

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al-Jahshayari, Kitab al-Wuzara' wa-l-Kuttab (Cairo, ١٩٣٨), ٨۶; al-Ya’qubi, III, ٨٩-٩٠, -١ ٩٢; Tabari, III, ٢٧, ٣۴; Ibn al-Taqtaqa, al-Fakhri fi al-Adab al-Sultaniyya (Cairo, ١٩٢٧),

.III, ٢; Watt, The Formative Period of Islamic Thought (Edinburgh, ١٩٧٣), ١٥٣-۴

٢ - al-Masudi, Ithbat al-Wasiyya (Najaf, ١٩٥۵), ١٨١-٢; Maqatil, ٢٠٩; Omar, F., "Some Aspects of the ‘Abbasid-Husaynid relations during the early ‘Abbasid period (١٣٢-١٩٣/٧۵٠-٨٠٩)," Arabica, XXII, ١٧١.

the caliphate were to be accepted by the general populace. As a result the ‘Alids now faced ‘Abbasid oppression more severe than that of the Umayyads(١).

The motives for this oppression seem to have been first of all doctrinal. The early members of the ‘Abbasid family, such as ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Abbas(٢), had confirmed ‘Ali's right to the Imamate (the political and religious authority) by relating many traditions attributed to the Prophet supporting it. They had also supported ‘Ali against the first three Caliphs and participated in the Caliphate of ‘Ali, and they gave some support to his son al-Hasan.(٣)

In the eyes of the ‘Alids by taking over the Caliphate the ‘Abbasids became usurpers of the political authority of the Imamate. Hence the ‘Abbasids became suspicious of the ‘Alid attitude toward their authority. Secondly there were economic motives for the ‘Abbasid oppression since Imam al-Sadiq continued to collect the khums secretly from his followers(۴), an act which the ‘Abbasids considered as a preparatory step towards some conspiracy to overthrow them.

These two factors obliged the ‘Abbasids to keep al-Sadiq in Medina and to hold his followers, especially in Iraq and later in Egypt, under close scrutiny as measures to ensure the security of the state.

Thus al-Sadiq maintained an externally quiescent policy towards the ‘Abbasids. Yet at the same time he spread traditions amongst the Shi’ite narrators of traditions stating that the Imamate was a prerogative bestowed by God upon one of the descendants of al-Husayn, who, before his death and

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١ - Kashif al-Ghita', Asl al-Shi’a wa-isulaha (Qumm, ١٣٩١), ۵١; Ahmad Amin, Dhuha al-

.Islam (Cairo, ١٩٥۶), III, ٢٨١-٢; al-Isfahani, Kitab al-Aghani XI, ٣٠٠

٢- 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas b. 'Abd al-Muttalib was one of the companions of the Prophet. He was born three years before the Prophet's emigration to Medina and in-the year ۶٨/۶٨٧ in Ta'if. He was famous in his deep knowledge about the interpretation of the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition. Thus he acquired the title Hibru-l-Umma, the learned man of the nation. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalam, al Isaba, II, ٣٣٠-۴.

٣ - Muhammad Rid'a al-Muzaffar, al-Saqifa (Najaf, ١٩۶۵), ۶٩-٧٠. An example of the cooperation between the 'Abbasids and 'Ali during his regime: he appointed Quthum b. al-'Abbas as governor of Mecca and al-Ta'if, 'Ubayd Allah b. 'Abbas in Yemen and Bahrain and 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas in Basra. When 'Ali died 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas associated with al-Hasan as a leader in his army. Tabari, V, ۶۴-۵, ١٣٧, ١۴١-٣, ١۵۵, ١۵٨-٩; al-Suyuti, Tarikh al-Khulafa'(Cairo, ١٩۶۴), ٢٠۵; al-QarashT, al-Imam al-Hasan (Najaf, ١٩٧٣), ۴٩-۵۴.

۴- al-Kafi I, ٢٠٣-۴, ۵۴۵-۶, ۵١۶. Several sources report that the other Imams received the khums and voluntary gifts from their followers, some of whom were working in the 'Abbasid offices, such as Hasan b. 'Alya al-Asadi, who was the governor of Bahrain. According to another report, the ninth Imam, al- Jawad, ordered his followers to send him his share of the booty which they had seized from the Khurramiyya. al-Tusi, al-Istibsar (Tehran, ١٩٧٠), II, ۵٨, ۶٠-٢; Maqatil, ٣٣٣.

at the Prophet's order, had transferred it to his successor by a clear stipulation (al-Nass al-Jali)(١).

Al-Sadiq held that it was not necessary for the divinely appointed Imam to rise in revolt immediately in order to recover his rights to political authority. He should be satisfied with the spiritual leadership and perform its duties until the time when the community is sufficiently aware of his right to political power. Then God will assist him in his quest(٢).

In accordance with his quiescent policy al-Sadiq announced openly that al-Qa'im al-Mahdi and not himself would achieve political power(٣).

Al-Sadiq's quiescent policy did not satisfy a considerable body of his adherents. Their

political ambitions caused schism amongst the Imamites. The instigator of this political movement was called Abu al-Khattab. At first he was trusted by al-Sadiq and nominated as agent (wakil) of the Shi’ite group in Kufa.

But al-Sadiq then repudiated and denounced him because of his extremist theological view(۴), which he had endeavoured to enforce by militant means. It seems likely that Abu al-Khattab wanted to circumvent the influence and the interference of al-Sadiq by propounding his political and revolutionary ideas to al-Sadiq's son Isma'il, who was more inclined to such thoughts than his younger brother Musa. Thus Abu al-Khattab hoped to give his revolutionary ideas religious legitimacy under Isma’il's name.

Although the rebellion of Abu al-Khattab was easily subdued at Kufa, his failure and al-Sadiq's continued insistence on a quiescent policy forced Abu al-Khattab's followers to resort to underground activities under the leadership

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۱- al-Kafi, I, ۲۷۹-۸۱.

۲- Omar, op. cit., Arabica, XXII (۱۹۷۵), ۱۷۵-۶.

۳- For a full account of al-Sadiq's statements concerning the future Mahdi see Kama’l, ۳۳۳-۵۹.

۴- Ikhtiyar, ۲۹۰-۳,۳۲۱,۳۲۳,۳۲۶. For detail about Abu al-Khattab's activities see al Shibi, K. M., al-Sila bayn al-Tasawwuf wa-l-Tashayyu’, Baghdad, ۱۹۶۶, ۱۴۱-۶; Ivanow, The Alleged founder of Isma’ilism (Bombay, ۱۹۴۶), ۱۱۳-۵۱; B. Lewis, The origins of Isma’ilism (Cambridge, ۱۹۴۰). ۳۲, ۳۹, ۶۶. B. Lewis, "Abu al Khattab', E. ۱۲

of Muhammad b. Isma’il. This event led the adherents of al-Sadiq to split into the Isma'ilis and the Musawiyya.

After his death, they split into Musawiyya, who held the Imamate of Musa al-Kazim, al-Fatthiyya, who held the Imamate of the eldest son of al-Sadiq, Abd Allah al-Aftah; al-Muhammadiyya, who held the Imamate of Muhammad b. Ja’far al-Sadiq, the Waqifa, who thought that al-Sadiq had not died but was al-Qa’im al-Mahdi; and the two Isma’ili sects who held the Imamate of Isma'il and his son Muhammad

.(respectively(۱

(The Imamite activities during the period of al-Kazim (۱۴۸-۱۸۳/۷۶۵-۷۹۹ .۲

As a consequence of al-Sadiq's death the Imamites became so weak that even if military rebellion might have been possible during his lifetime, there was little chance of it now. The rise of the Isma'ilis during al-Sadiq's lifetime, followed by the rise of the Fathiyya sect, which included most of the Imamite fuqaha',(۲) made the position of al-Sadiq's successor, Musa al-Kazim, very weak, and obliged him to follow the quiescent .policy of his father

For this reason al-Mansur(d. ۱۵۸/۷۷۴) did not take any action against him or his followers during his life-time. However he continued his pursuit of the representatives .(of the revolutionary branch of the Hasanids(۳

The regime of al-Mahdi, who was installed in the Caliphate after the death of his father al-Mansur in ۱۵۸/۷۷۴,(۴) was distinguished by his "orthodox" policy. He encouraged the traditional muhaddithun, pursued the zindiqs, and oppressed the People of the Book(۵). However, "this policy could be described as less religious policy than a political weapon. The promotion of the Surma

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N. Firaq, ۵۶-۶۶, al-Shibi, op. cit, ۲۰۶-۳۱; C. Huart, "Isma'iliyya' E ۱۲ -۱

N. Firaq, ۶۵. For an account of the Fathiyya see Watt, "Side-lights on Early Imamite -۲ .Doctrine', Studia Islamica, MC MLXX, vol. XXXI°, ۲۹۳-۵; al-Hasam, op. cit., II ۳۶۹-۷۷

.Tabari, III, ۲۶۱-۳, ۳۷۷-۸; Mizan, IV, ۲۱۱ -۳

.Muruj, VI, ۲۲۴; Shaban, Islamic History (C.U.P., ۱۹۷۶), II, ۲۱ -۴

.al-Kafi, I, ۴۷۸; Muruj, VI, ۲۲۷ -۵

by the ʻAbbdsids was, in fact, a means in the struggle against the religio-political .(enemies or opposition movements"(۱

This statement is illustrated by al-Mahdi's attitude towards the Imamites. When he came to power in ۱۵۸/۷۷۴, the followers of al-Kazim became active and more powerful

.(than the Fathiyya and the Isma'ilis(٢

Al-Mahdi thought that the religious and intellectual activities of al-Kazim's partisans might endanger his regime, especially as there was a report indicating "that an important body of opinion had been turning towards the ‘Alids and away from the ‘Abbasids or rather, had been insisting that the Hashimite charisma was not equally .(spread through all the clan, but was peculiarly present in the ‘Alids alone(٣

Perhaps for this reason, al-Mahdi summoned al-Kazim from Medina and imprisoned him in Baghdad. But in so doing he neither reinforced the legitimacy of his rule nor .(changed public opinion towards the charismatic character of al-Kazim(۴

Therefore, he decided to follow a policy which depended on bribery and the intimidation of the Shi’a. Al-Kazim was released in ۱۵۹/۷۷۵, after he had sworn that he would not rise in arms against al-Mahdi or his successors(۵). According to al-Tabari, al-Mahdi simultaneously approached the Zaydites in order to gain their assistance in .monitoring the activities of the ‘Alids and their followers

For example, he made overtures to Ya'qub b. Dawud, who belonged to a family which had worked in the secretarial affairs of Khurasan during the Umayyad period(۶), and made him his "brother in God". Then, in ۱۶۳/۷۹۹, al-Mahdi

p: ۵۲

Omar, F., "Some observations on the Reign of the ‘Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdi (۱۵۸- - ۱ .۱۶۹/۷۷۵-۷۸۵)", Arabica, XXI, ۱۳۹

.Sa’d b. ‘Abd Allah al-Ashari al-Qummi, al-Maqalat wa-I-Firaq (Tehran, ۱۹۶۳), ۸۹ -۲

.Watt,Formative Period, ۱۵۵ -۳

.al-Kafi, I, ۴۸۴ -۴

al-Khatib al-Baghdad, Tarikh Baghdad (Beirut, ۱۹۳۱), XIII, ۳۱; Tabari, III, ۵۳۳; Ibn -۵ .Tulun, al-Shadharat al-Dhahabiyya (Beirut, ۱۹۵۸), ۹۶

.Tabari, III, ۵۰۶-۷; al-Fakhri, ۱۳۶ -۶

made him his vizier and vested him with full powers to handle all the affairs of the

Caliphate, whereupon Ya'qub gathered together the Zaydites and appointed them to the high offices of the state(۱).

Al-Mahdi may have been motivated by the fact that the non-revolutionary Zaydites (al-Jara'riyya) believed in the Imamate of the Inferior (al-Mafdul) as long as the Superior (al-Afdal), was present, and such dogma might give a legitimate foundation to his Caliphate which could be used against the ‘Alids.

During al-Mahdi's regime the claim was put forward that the lawful Imam after the Prophet was not ‘Ali but al-’Abbas, and that therefore the Imamate belonged to his family(۲). In fact Ya'qub b. Dawud brought many jurisprudents together from Basra, Kufa and al-Sham and organised them(۳) so as to further this claim. Al-Kashshi reports two transmissions to support this.

He says that the Zaydite Hisham b. Ibrahim wrote many Zaydite works, one of them entitled "The Confirmation of the Imamate of al- ‘Abbas", and he adds that another Zaydite, called Ibn al-Muq’ad, wrote a heresiographical work illustrating the dogmas, places and activities of the pro-Imamites, such as al-Ya’furiyya, al-Zurariyya, al-Ammariyya, and al-Jawaliqiyya, and submitted his work to al-Mahdi. This work was then recited together with a warning by the Caliph at the gates of Baghdad, Medina and other cities(۴).

The recitation of this work was the first step to al-Mahdi's pursuit of the other factions of the pro‘Alids. Some of these pro-’Alids were obliged to flee from

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۱- Tabari III, ۵۰۸; al-Saduq agrees with al-Tabari about the persuasion of Ya'qub b. Dawud, but he mentions that he was coverted to the Imamiteschool about ۱۷۹/۷۹۵. See ‘Uyun, ۶۰. However, Ya’qub belonged to a Shi’ite family from Merv. His father and uncle helped promote ‘Abbasid propaganda in Khurasan. Later Ya’qub himself was associated with al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in his revolt in ۱۴۵/۷۶۲, after which he was imprisoned until ۱۵۸/۷۷۴-۵. Shaban, op. cit., ۲۱.

۲- N. Firaq, ۴۳; Watt, Formative Period, ۱۵۵; according to al-Balkhi this claim was

invented by the Rawandiyya after the death of al-Mahdi. However, it appears that the Rawandiyya had held this claim at the instigation of al-Mahdi himself. AI-Qadf 'Abd al-Jabbar, op. cit., II, ۱۷۷

.Tabari, III, ۴۸۶-۷ -۳

Ikhtiyar, ۲۶۵-۶, ۵۰۱. All these groups derived their names from various companions -۴ of al-Sadiq: i.e. Abd Allah b. Abi Ya'fur, Zurara b. A yun, 'Ammar b. Mnsa al-Sabati and Hisham b. Salim al-Jawaliqi respectively. al Najashi, ۱۳۲, ۱۵۷, ۲۲۳, ۳۳۸; T. al-Fihrist, ۱۴۱-۳, .۲۳۵, ۳۵۶

Kufa to remote provinces, like Yemen (۱), while al-Kazim spread instructions amongst his adherents for them to follow his quiescent policy carefully. Al-Kashshi's report seems to indicate that the tense relationship between the 'Abbasids and the pro-'Alids continued until the death of al-Mahdi in ۱۶۹/۷۸۵.(۲)

Although some of this tension seems to have been alleviated with the accession of al-Hadi, the Hasanids were closely watched and their salaries cut. They began to increase their propaganda in Khurasan and the other provinces in a new Zaydite form, and they contacted the leading personalities of the Hasanids in Medina, encouraging them to revolt(۳).

As a part of al-Hadi's precautionary policy the Hasanids of Medina were forced to come to the office of the governor every evening. They exploited a gathering of their followers from numerous provinces during the Pilgrimage and made their ill-treatment by the governor an excuse to rebel in ۱۶۹/۷۸۵. But their uprising was easily defeated and resulted in their being massacred in the battle of Fakhkh(۴).

However the Caliph accused al-Kazim of provoking the rebels and decided to kill him, but died in ۱۷۰/۷۸۶ before he could put his decision into practice(۵).

The battle of Fakhkh and the commitment of al-Hades successor, al-Rashid, to the anti- 'Alid policy of his predecessors only served to entrench the political strategy of the three 'Alid parties, the revolutionary Hasanids, the Isma'ilis and the Imamites.

The Imamite group under Imam Musa al-Kazim became stronger and more

organised, and insisted on a gradual movement towards their

۱- Ikhtiyar, ۳۳۵.

۲- Ikhtiyar, ۲۶۹-۷۰.

۳- al-Ya'qubi, III, ۱۴۲. It is clear from the prominent persons who took part in this revolt that it was Zaydite, for example Yahya, Sulayman and Idris, the brothers of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, who rebelled in the year ۱۴۵/۷۶۲ against al-Mansur. Moreover Ibrahim b. Isma'il Tabataba was the father of Muhammad b. Tabataba, the spiritual leader of the Zaydite revolt which took place in Kufa in ۱۹۹/۸۱۴ (Maqatil, ۲۹۷, ۳۰۴). It is worth mentioning that al-Sahib b. 'Abbad considered the individuals mentioned above as Zaydite; al-Sahib b. 'Abbad, Nusrat Madhahib al-Zaydiyya (Baghdad, ۱۹۷۷), ۲۲۲.

۴- Tabari, III, ۵۵۲-۳, ۵۵۷-۹; Muruj, VI, ۲۲۶-۷; Maqatil, ۲۹۸.

۵- 'Ibar, III, ۲۱۵-۶. Al-Isfahani mentions two narrations about the attitude of al-Kazim. The first one reveals that he refused to participate in the revolt, while the second shows that he ordered Yahya al-Mahd to rise in arms; Maqatil, ۲۹۸, ۳۰۴. There is evidence showing that al-Kazim did not take part in this revolt but encouraged the rebels to fight the 'Abbasids vigorously, al-Kafi, I, ۳۶۶.

political goal, but the Imam rejected any bid to rise in arms because he considered this the task of al-Qa'im(۱).

His adherents, most of whom were originally from Kufa, were scattered throughout the Islamic state and used the rite of Pilgrimage to communicate with each other. They succeeded in maintaining an important body of followers in Akhmim in Egypt, which became a centre for communication between the Shi'a in Kufa and those in Egypt(۲). They had other followers in al-Maghrib(۳).

Al-Kazim permitted a few of his adherents to work in the 'Abbasid administration, especially in the offices of al-wizara and al-barad (governmental mail), so that they could help to save their fellows in times of danger. Hence several Imamite families held office, such as that of 'Ali b. Yaqtin (۴) and that of al-Ash'ath, including Ja'far b.

Muhammad al-Ash'ath and his son al- 'Abbas, who became the governor of Khurasan, and Waddah (or Wadih), who worked in the barid of Egypt(۵).

The enlargement of al-Kazim's party increased his wealth, for there is much evidence to indicate that he collected secretly from his adherents(۶) the khums, the zakat, gifts and other taxes enjoined in the Shari'a as part of what was due to his Imamate.

The second Shi'ite party was the Isma'ilis, who had already disassociated themselves from the quiescent policy of al-Sadiq and his son al-Kazim by adopting the Imamate of Isma'il first and then of his son Muhammad, both of whom were more inclined toward more actively revolutionary underground political activities.

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۱- al-Galbaygani, op. cit., ۲۱۹, quoted from al-Khazaz al-Razi al-Qumi, Kifayat al-Athar fi al-Nusus 'ala al-Imam at-Thani 'Ashar.

۲- al-Kafi, I, ۴۹۴. The Imamite activities in Egypt may have started in Akhmim during the time of al-Sadiq, because some people of Akhmim such as 'Uthman b. Suwayd al-Akhmimi and Dhu al-Nun al-Misri were students of Jabir b. Hayyan al-Kufi, who was a student of al-Sadiq (al-Qifti, Tarikh al-Hukama' [Leipzig, ۱۹۰۳], ۱۸۵; al-Shibi, op. cit., ۳۶۰). Among al-Kazim's Kufan agents in Egypt were 'Uthman b. 'Isa al-Rawasi and al-Husayn b. 'Ali al-'Uyun, ۹۲; al Najashi, ۵۲, ۲۳۰.

۳- Ikhtiyar, ۴۴۲.

۴- Ikhtiyar, ۴۳۳. For a full account of other names see al-Najashi, ۱۰۴, ۱۵۸, ۲۵۴-۵.

۵ - Tabari, III, ۵۶۱, ۶۰۹, ۶۱۲, ۷۴۰; al-Ya'qubi, III, ۱۶۶; al-Kafi, II, ۲۲۴-۵. AI-Kashshi mentions that the family of Banu al-Ash ath sent the zakat (۳۰,۰۰۰ dinars) to the agent of al-Kazim in Kufa, which seems to confirm their Imamite inclinations; Ikhtiyar, ۴۵۹

۶- Uyun, I, ۱۸, ۲۴, ۲۵-۶, ۹۲; Ikhtiyar, ۴۰۵, ۴۶۸; al-Fakhri, ۱۴۵-۶; al-Haythami, al Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa (Cairo, ۱۳۱۲/۱۸۹۴), ۱۰۱.

learnt from the repeated failure of the Hasanid uprisings, which were initiated without political preparation, and they decided to struggle for power through a gradual

.political process

This decision encouraged them to adopt ideas from beyond the circle of Islam, and their adoption of these ideas may have "liberated" their minds from the limits of Shari'a. They put forward new interpretations of the Islamic texts, according to which .(each passage had an esoteric and an exoteric meaning(١

For example, a tradition attributed to the Prophet says that the Mahdi will appear when the sun rises from the place of its setting. According to them, this meant not the rising of the real sun, but that of al-Mahdi, who would appear in al-Maghrib. Therefore, they became more interested in preaching their doctrine in al-Maghrib and .(encouraged their followers in the east to emigrate there(٢

Nawbakhti's reports suggest that the relationship between the Isma'ilis and al-Kazim's followers was tense, since the Isma'ili leaders allowed their followers to assassinate the Imamites who supported al-Kazim(٣). Moreover the Imamites .(accused the Isma'ilis of being implicated in the arrest of al-Kazim(۴

In the Hijaz the situation of the third Shi'ite group, the Hasanids, was very difficult following the total defeat of their second revolt in Fakhkh in ١۶٩/٧٨۵. The 'Abbasids discovered that the notion of al-Mahdi had been in circulation amongst the Hasanids .and that they believed that he might rise in Mecca

,It was such a notion that encouraged two Hasanid leaders to rise in arms

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.N. Firaq, ۶٣- ۶۴ -١

Ivanow, W., The Rise of the Fatimids (Bombay, ١٩۴۶), ۴٩-۵٢, quoting from an Isma'ili -٢ .Ms entitled Zahr al-Ma'ani

.N. Firaq, ۶۴ -٣

Al-Kulayni mentions this on the authority of 'Ali b. Ja'far al-Sadiq. His narrations -۴ states that Muhammad b. Isma'il met his uncle al-Kazim in Mecca and asked him to allow him to go to Baghdad. Al-Kazim did so and gave him ٣٠٠ dinars and ٣٠٠٠ dirhams

for the expense of his journey. Then he warned his nephew not to bring about his death by giving the authorities information concerning his activities. However, Muhammad contacted the caliph Harun al-Rashid and informed him that his uncle was considered the real caliph by the people who had visited him; al-Kafi, I, ۴۸۵-۶. Also .see Ikhtiyar, ۲۶۳-۵; Ibn Hazm, Jamharat Ansab al-'Arab (Cairo, ۱۹۷۱), ۶۰

first al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in ۱۴۵/۷۶۲ and then al-Husayn b. 'Ali in ۱۶۹/۷۸۵, each of whom .(hoped that he might be the promised Mahdi(۱

Thus the ‘Abbasids continued to restrict the movements of the Hasanids and forced them to present themselves to the governor (al-Wali) every evening."(۲) This critical situation made it impossible for the Hasanids to take any militant action in the Hijaz, so two of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya's brothers left Medina after the battle of Fakhkh to .promote their claims elsewhere

The first of these was Yahya al-Mahd, who went to the province of Daylam and preached his ideas there, winning considerable support from the native princes and the people of Daylam, whom he provoked to rebellion against the caliph al-Rashid in (۱۷۵/۷۹۱.(۳

The second brother, Idris, fled to Egypt, where he already had a large body of partisans, and, with the assistance of a certain Wadih, a Shi'ite working in the bared, managed to escape from there to al-Maghrib. It seems most likely that his partisans in al-Maghrib had already spread much propaganda against the ‘Abbasids, because within three years Idris succeeded in rebelling against them and establishing the (Idrisid state, in ۱۷۲/۷۸۸.(۴

The numerous Shi'ite activities mentioned above seem to have been the causes of al-Rashid's anti-'Alid policy, which covered most of his Caliphate. In ۱۷۱ /۷۸۷ he became suspicious of the loyalty of the ‘Alids in Baghdad, and decided to gather all of them .(together and exile them to Medina(۵

He followed this step with the appointment of Bakkar

۱- al-Fakhri (Gotha, Greifswald, ۱۸۶۰), ۱۹۵-۶, ۲۲۷-۸; al-Kafi, I, ۳۶۶.

۲- Ibn al-Athir, al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh (Leiden, ۱۸۶۶-۱۸۷۶), VI, ۶۱.

۳ - Tabari, III, ۶۱۲-۳; al-Fakhri, ۲۳۱; al-Kulayni records a correspondence between Yahya al-Mahd and al-Kdzim, which indicates that the latter had nothing to do with this revolt; al-Kafi, I, ۳۶۶-۷.

۴- Ahmad b. Khalid al-Misri al-Salawi, al-Istaqsa li-Akhbar al-Maghrib al-Aqsa (al Dar al-Bayda, ۱۹۵۴), I, ۶۷-۹.

۵- Tabari, III, ۶۰۶.

al-Zubayri, a descendant of 'Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr, as governor of Medina and he ordered him to put the 'Alids under close watch and to restrict their movements(۱). As for the rebellion of Yahya al-Mahd in Daylam, al-Rashid sent an army against him (fifty thousand according to al-Tabari) under the leadership of al-Fadl b. Yahya al-Barinaki.

Through diplomacy and promises of amnesty he managed to persuade Yahya al-Mahd to end his uprising and to surrender, after giving him a guarantee of security from al-Rashid. But the Caliph was not satisfied, so he had al-Mahd arrested in Baghdad and killed (۲).

As for the revolt of Idris al-Mahd, al-Rashid followed the policy of his father al-Mahdi by using the Zaydites against the other 'Alids. He sent a Zaydite scholar called Sulayman b. Jarir to kill Idris. In order to hide his secret target, Sulayman pretended to be a Shi'ite partisan who had escaped from the 'Abbasids' oppression. He became one of the courtiers of Idris and managed to poison him in ۱۷۷/۷۹۳.(۳)

However the assassination of IdrTs did not bring about the disintegration of his state, as the Berber tribes installed his child, Idris II, after his death. For this reason al-Rashid vested Ibrahim b. al-Aghlab with the government of Ifriqiyya and, four years later, encouraged him to establish the Aghlabid state, possibly to counteract the danger posed by the Idrisids(۴).

In the meantime the Imamite scholars were active in the intellectual field in Egypt, .(Yaman, Iraq and Khurasan(۵

,Hisham b. al-Hakam, for example

۱- Tabari, III, ۶۱۴, ۶۱۶.

۲- Tabari, III, ۶۱۳-۱۶; al-Ya'qubi, III, ۱۴۵-۶;'Ibar, III, ۲۱۸; al-Kamil, VI, ۸۵.

۳- Because Sulayman succeeded in killing Idris, the Caliph al-Rashid appointed him to the barid of Egypt, and had the previous official Wadih, who had helped Idris in his escape to al-Maghrib, killed; Tabari, III, ۵۶۱

۴- Tabari, III, ۵۶۱, ۶۴۹; al-Kamil, VI, ۱۰۶-۸.

۵- Osman, op. cit., ۳۰۰; Q. Maqalat, ۸۸; Ikhtiyar, ۵۹۸-۹.

attempted to prove the legitimacy of the Imamate of al-Kazim, which means that he .(considered the 'Abbasids as usurpers of al-Kazim's rights(۱

The Hasanid uprisings in Daylam and al-Maghrib and the underground activities of the Imamites and the Isma'ilis worried alRashid and made him think that al-Kazim, whom he already knew to be receiving the khums, the kharaj and gifts from his followers; was behind all these activities and had prepared a conspiracy to overthrow him. .(Therefore he initiated a campaign of arresting the Imamites(۲

He started by arresting al-Kazim in Medina in ۱۷۹/۷۹۵, and sent him to prison in Basra and Baghdad(۳). Furthermore, Ibn al-Mu'tazz reports that al-Rashid ordered the .(Zaydite Abu 'Isma to kill the Imamite poet Mansur al-Nammari(۴

It was this campaign of persecution that forced the Imamite missionary Hisham b. al-Hakam to hide in Mada'in, from whence he escaped to Kufa, where he died two .(months later(۵

However al-Rashid's arrests did not deter the Imamite underground activities, especially in Basra. Therefore, according to the Imamite narrations, al-Kazim was

.(poisoned for al-Rashid in ۱۸۳/۷۹۹ at the instigation of Yahya al-Barinaki(۶

.(Al-Rashid also put to death sixty 'Alids who were in his prisons(۷

The death of al-Kazim led to another schism amongst the Imamites. The first group, which represented quite a large body, was called the Waqifa. They held that he was al-Qa'im al-Mahdi, but they differed amongst themselves concerning his death and split into four sub-groups, three of whom maintained that he had died while the fourth .(denied it(۸

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.Ikhtiyar, ۲۵۸-۶۳ -۱

al-Tabarsi, al-Ihtijaj (Najaf, ۱۹۶۶), ۱۶۱; Ikhtiyar, ۲۶۲. Some of the Imamites accused -۲ the Isma'ilis of provoking al-Rashid against al-Kazim. They mentioned that Muhammad b. Isma'il informed al-Rashid about al-Kazim's underground activities (al-Kafi I, ۴۸۵-۶). Whereas the arrest of al-Kazim was part of the general plan of the Caliph which he carried out against the Imamites, several remarks suggest that the viziers Banu al-Marmak were behind al-Rashid's plan, in order to bring about the fall of their Imamite competitors in the 'Abbasid ministry, the family of Banu al-Ash'ath; .al-Kafi, II, ۲۲۴-۵; Ikhtiyar, ۲۵۸

.al-Kafi, I, ۴۷۶;N. Firaq, ۷۱-۲ -۳

.Ibn al-Mutazz, Tabaqat al-Shu ara' (Cairo, ۱۹۵۶), ۲۴۴ -۴

According to al-Najashi and al-Tusi, Hisham's death occurred in ۱۹۹/۸۱۴. But it - ۵ seems that he died before that. Al-Kashshi associates his death with the arrest of al-Kazim in ۱۷۹/۷۹۵. In that year Hisham attended a theological symposium in the presence of al-Rashid and Yahya al-Barinak'. Later al-Rasfd issued an order to arrest al-Kazim and his partisans. Hence Hisham escaped to Madain, then to Kufa where he .died two months later; al-Najashi, ۳۳۸; T. al-Fihrist, ۳۵۵; Ikhtiyar, ۲۵۵-۶, ۲۵۸-۶۲

N. Firaq, ۶۷; Ikhtiyar, ۲۵۸; al-Kafi, I, ۲۵۸-۹; al-Ya'qubi relates that the 'Alid - ۶ underground activities were probably quite strong in Basra. The increase in the

activities of the missionary of this group, Ahmad b. 'Isa al-'Alawi, who spent sixty years hidden there, finally caused al-Rashid to pursue them. Ahmad b. 'Isa was imprisoned, but he managed to escape to Basra in ۱۸۸/۸۰۳. Then 'Abbasid spies detected the missionary and the agent of his group, Hadir, who refused to reveal the place of his leader; so they killed him and impaled his body in Baghdad; al-Ya'qubi, III, .۱۶۰

.Uyun, I, ۸۹-۹۰, II, ۱۴۳ -۷

N. Firaq, ۶۷-۸, ۷۰; Q. Maqalat, ۸۹-۹۱; al-Najashi, ۶۱, ۲۵۸, ۲۳۰-۳۱. It seems from the -۸ report of al-Kashshi that Muhammad b. Bashir and his followers applied the term al-Mahdi to al-Kazim, whose death they denied, giving him the epithet al-Qaim al-Mahdi (Ikhtiyar, ۴۷۸). Such evidence indicates that the Imamites already knew about the rise of one of their Imams under the title of al-Qa'im al Mahdi, but they were not sure who .this would be

anecdotes mentioned by the Ithna' 'Ashariyya suggest that the cause of the denial of al-Kazim's death was that some of his agents, like 'Uthman b. 'Isa al-Rawasi in Egypt, and Ziyad, al-Qindi, 'Ali b. Abi Hamza, Hayyan and al-Sarraj in Kufa, possessed a large amount of money (more than a hundred thousand dinars) which belonged to al-Kazim. Since they had used this money for their own benefit, they denied his death and rejected the Imamate of al-Rid'a in order that they would have an excuse for not .(returning the money(۱

However, it is hard to agree with al-Kashshi's view concerning the reason behind the emergence of the Waqifa sect. Most of the traditions concernng the occultation and the rise of al-Qa'im are attributed to al-Sadiq, who did not indicate explicitly which of .(his descendants would be al-Qa'im(۲

Therefore it is very likely that a considerable number of the muhaddithun thought that the Imam had indicated his son Musa and hence stopped at him, contending that he .was al-Qa'im al-Mahdi and was in a state of occultation

The second group resulting from the schism after al-Kazim's death held that he had passed away and the Imam was his son 'Ali al-Rid'a, who, according to al-Kulayni,

assumed the Imamate by the designation of his father(۳). Al-Rid'a faced many difficulties in proving his right to the Imamate, not only to his father's prominent followers, but also to his brother Ahmad.(۴)

However, between the years ۱۸۳-۱۹۹/۷۹۹-۸۱۴, he managed to maintain a considerable number of followers,

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۱- al-Saduq,'Ilal al-Shara'i' (Najaf, ۱۹۶۶), I, ۲۳۵;'Uyun, ۹۱-۲; Ikhtiyar, ۴۵۹-۶۰, ۴۶۷,۴۶۸,۴۹۳. The leaders of the Waqifa were Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. Shammun and 'Ali b. Abi Hamza; Ikhtiyar, ۴۴۴; al-Najashi, ۲۳۰-۱.

۲- al-Kafi, I, ۳۳۳-۴۳.

۳- al-Kafi, I, ۳۱۲; Q. Maqalat, ۸۹

۴- Ikhtiyar, ۴۶۴-۵,۴۷۲.

and administer an underground system of communication to carry on the religious functions of his Imamate(۱).

Moreover his preference for the religious dimensions of Islam, rather than its political dimensions, made him a magnet for many individuals, including the precursors of the sufi movements, especially in Khurasan(۲). But many Imamites who had accepted his Imamate were not satisfied with his quietist attitude and involved themselves in the underground activities of the revolutionary Zaydites, probably without his permission(۳).

۳. The Attitude of al-Rid'a towards the 'Alid Revolt against al-Ma'mun

When al-Amin became caliph, Iraq was the centre of his power. It was here that he maintained the support of the Arabs, and especially that of the Murji'ite scholars (al-amma, later called the Sunnites), while his brother al-Ma'mun was governor of Khurasan and gained the support of its military leaders and senior administrators, especially the Persian vizier al-Fadl b. Sahl and his partisans, who eventually helped him to overthrow al-Amin(۴).

Al-Ma'mun's success in gaining the caliphate was contrary to the political and economic interest of al-Amm's supporters. Therefore many regional revolts took place in Syria, al-Jazira, Yemen and Iraq, headed by the local 'Abbasid governors(۵).

At the same time the 'Alids used their underground propaganda which was influential in the Yemen, Hijaz and Iraq, to exploit al-Ma'mun's difficulties in Iraq and to cause a revolt in Kufa in ۱۹۹/۸۱۵. Thus these regions fell out of al-Ma'mun's control.

Although reports about the ideological identity of the 'Alid uprising and the events surrounding it are confused, apparently it was a Zaydite revolt(۶) maintained with the support of some

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۱- Ikhtiyar, ۵۹۱- ۵۹۲.

۲ - Most of the eastern Sufi movements trace their origins to Ma'ruf al-Karkhi (d. ۲۰۰/۸۱۵), who was a companion of al-Rid'a. They regarded al-Rid'a as of the Sufi movement, but at the same time they did not believe in his Imamate. For an account of this relation see al-Shibi, op. cit.

۳- Uyun, II, ۲۳۴-۵.

۴- Watt, Formative Period, ۱۷۶; al-Fakhri, ۱۵۹-۶۱; al-Kamil,, VI, ۲۲۷.

۵- Ibn A'tham al-Kufi, op. cit., VIII, ۳۱۲-۳. The most dangerous revolt was the rebellion of Nasr b. Shabth in al-Jazira. Another serious revolt was the protest of the populace (al-Amma) of Baghdad against the installation of al-Rid'a as heir-apparent by al-Ma'mun. Thus they installed Ibrahim b. al-Mahdi as a caliph there; Bidaya, X, ۲۸۰-۲; al-Kamil, VI, ۲۳۰.

۶ - It is clear from the reports of al-Tabari and al-Najashi that the rebels did not believe in the Imamate of a specific 'Alid Imam, but they supported the Imamate of him who would rise in arms in order to establish his rights to this office (Tabari, III, ۹۷۹, ۱۰۱۹; al-Najashi, ۱۹۴). They wrote on the coins which they mined in Kufa a Qur'anic verse (al-Saff ۵۱: ۴) revealing their, revolutionary inclination. Al-Isfahani and al-Sahib b. 'Abbad considered it a Zaydite uprising; Maqatil, ۳۴۷, ۳۵۰;'Uyun, II, ۲۳۵; Ibn 'Abbad, op. cit., ۲۲۲.

Imamite sects. These included the followers of Ahmad b. Musa al-Kazim and the sabtiyya, the followers of Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq(۱), along with some of the Imamites, but without the direct order of the eighth Imam, al-Rid'a(۲).

The spiritual leader of this revolt was Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. Tabataba, while its military leader was Abu al-Saraya. It broke out under the slogan "We invite people to rally around the most suitable leader from the progeny of Muhammad and to practice the teachings of the Qur'an and the sunna'(۳) in Kufa on the ۱۰th Jumada ۱۹۹/۲۶th January ۸۱۵, where the rebels had the support of the people of the environs of Kufa and of the bedouins. Abu al-Saraya minted coins in his own name in Kufa, managed to defeat three ‘Abbasid armies and occupied Mada'in(۴).

Moreover he dispatched many successful campaigns under the leadership of al-Rid'a's brothers and relatives to extend his authority in Iraq, al-Ahwaz, Fars, the Hijaz, and Yemen. They fulfilled their tasks and became the governors of these regions.

For example, Zayd b. Musa al-Kazim became the governor of alAhwaz and Basra, Fars came under the control of Isma'il b. Musa al-Kazim, and Yemen came under the control of his brother Ibrahim, Wasit was ruled by Husayn b. Ibrahim b. al-Hasan b ‘Ali. Abu al-Saraya appointed Sulayman b. Dawud in Medina, and nominated al-Husayn al-Aftas as governor in Mecca, authorising him to be the leader of the pilgrims and to provide the Ka'ba with a white kiswa(۵).

The authority of

p: ۶۲

۱- Muruj, VII, ۵۶.

۲- A considerable body of the followers of al-Rid'a participated in this revolt without his instruction. Perhaps they noticed that the brothers of their Imam were prominent leaders of the revolt, and thought that al-Rid'a was behindtheir participation. Hence they joined it. There were men like Muhammad b. Muslima al-Kufi (Tabari, III, ۹۸۹), who was regarded by al-Najashi as trustworthy (al-Najashi, ۲۸۶;'Uyun, II, ۲۳۴-۵). It

seems from al-Rid'a's interpretation of a dream of one of his partisans concerning an expected uprising that he already knew of the activities of his kinsmen; al-Kafi, VIII, .۲۵۷

.al-Da'wa li-l-Rid'a min Al Muhammad wa-'Amal bi-l-Kitab wa-l-sunna -۳

.Tabari, III, ۹۷۶-۷۹ -۴

al-Kamil, VI, ۲۱۴-۱۶; Maqatil, ۳۵۵; Tabari, III, ۹۸۱-۳, ۹۸۸. Al-Azraqi reports that Abu al- -۵ Saraya sent a kiswa of silk to the Ka'ba in two colours, white and yellow, the former of which was the colour of the'Alids' standard. Between the two parts was written: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. May God bless Muhammad and his progeny, the noble descendants, the pure, and the best of the human race. Abu al-Saraya, he who invites people to rally behind Al Muhammad has ordered that this kiswa be made for the holy House of God." al-Azraqi, Akhbar Makka (Mecca, ۱۹۶۵), I, .۲۶۳, ۲۶۴

Abu al-Saraya increased after the mysterious death of the spiritual leader of the revolt, Ibn Tabataba on the ۱st Rajab ۱۹۹/۱۵th February ۸۱۵, and the refusal of the eminent 'Alid, 'Ali b. 'Ubayd Allah, to accept the position of Ibn Tabataba. Abu al-Saraya, in order to evade the interference of any strong spiritual leader, nominated for this post a young 'Alid called Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Zayd b. 'Ali(۱), and .monopolised all affairs of the leadership of the revolt

Abu al-Saraya's full control in Iraq did not continue, because the 'Abbasid army defeated him at Qasr b. Hubayra near Kufa and forced him to withdraw towards Basra along with ۸۰۰ horsemen. But news came to him that his governor in Basra, Zayd b. Musa al-Kazim, had also been defeated after hard combat and had been .captured by the 'Abbasid troops

Thus he went towards al-Ahwaz, but was defeated by the 'Abbasid governor of that city and his followers dispersed. A few months later the troops of al-Hasan b. Sahl captured him at Jalawla' and on ۱۰th Rabic I ۲۰۰/۱۸th October ۸۱۵ they beheaded him, .(after which his body was impaled in Baghdad(۲

It is worth mentioning that the failure of this revolt caused some Imamites to hold

that Musa al-Kazim, the seventh Imam, was al-Qa'im al-Mahdi They had considered his son Ahmad' as the lawful successor of his father. But since he had participated with Abu al-Saraya, they rejected his Imamate and denied the death of al-Kazim(٣).

This fact reveals the general attitude

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۱- al-Najashi, ۱۹۴; Maqatil, ۳۵۴; Gibb, H. A. R., "Abu al-Saraya", E.I۲

۲- Maqatil, ۳۶۳-۶;Tabari, III, ۹۸۵-۶.

۳- Al-Kulayni reports several traditions on the authority of 'Ali b. al-Husayn and al-Sadiq regarding this point, al-Kafi, VIII, ۲۶۴, ۳۱۰.

of the Imamites towards any militant action and indicates that they had Hadiths concerning the rise of an Imam with the sword, whose uprising would never be defeated, for he could not die without establishing the government of the People of the House. This may be the reason behind the quiescent attitude of those followers of al-Rid'a who did not take any open or active part in the revolt of Abu al-Saraya.

On hearing of the military defeat of their comrades on the Iraqi front after the death of Abu al-Saraya, the rebels in Mecca, who had full control of the Hijaz and the Yemen, made overtures to Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq, asking him to be their leader and finally persuading him to accept their offer. They swore the oath of allegiance to him as their caliph and called him Amir al-Mu'minin on ۶th Rabi' II ۲۰۰/۱۳th November ۸۱۵(۱).

He himself claimed that he was al-Qa'im al-Mahdi, and based his claim on prophetic traditions(۲). But the eighth Imam al-Rid'a denied his claim, although he endeavoured to save him from a military defeat by advising trim to postpone his revolt against the 'Abbasids(۳).

The installation by the rebels of an 'Alid caliph in Mecca with the epithet al-Mahdi threatened the authority of al-Ma'mun. Having failed to subdue the revolt by force, al-Ma'mun decided to resort to political methods, by conciliating the eight Imam al-Rid'a.

He dispatched an army under the leadership of 'Isa b. al-Juludi to Medina for this .(purpose(۴

But this army

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.Tabari, III, ۹۹۰ -۱
.Maqatil, ۳۵۹; Uyun, ۱۵۵ -۲
.al-Kafi, I, ۴۹۱; Maqatil, ۳۶۰ -۳
.al-Kafi, I, ۴۸۸-۹; 'Uyun, II, ۱۴۶; Tabari, III, ۱۰۰۰ -۴

was badly defeated at the hands of Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq. Therefore al-Juludi asked al-Rid'a to contact Muhammad and ask him to end his resistance, but he rejected al-Rid'a's mediation and insisted on continuing his rebellion. This led to skirmishes between the 'Abbasid troops and the rebels until the end of the year ۲۰۰/۸۱۵, when the 'Abbasid army captured Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq and forced .(him to renounce his claim publicly(۱

Because his arrest did not return the areas of revolt into the hands of the authorities, al-Juludi returned with him and al-Rid'a to Merv. According to al-Kulayni, al-Ma'mun welcomed al-Rid'a and offered him the caliphate, but he refused. However, after a .(few. months of negotiation with al-Ma mun, al-Rid'a agreed to be his successor(۲

The caliph announced his acceptance. on ۵th Ramadan ۲۰۱/۲۸th March ۸۱۷ and called him "al-Rid'a mini Al Muhammad'. At the same time he ordered his soldiers to wear green clothes instead of the black which was the emblem of the 'Abbasids. Then he strengthened his relations with al-Rid'a by marrying his sister Umm Habiba to al-.(Rid'a(۳

The installation of al-Rid'a was in reality a political step arranged by the Persian vizier al-Fadl b. Sahl and associated with other policies aimed at consolidating his Persian support and harming the interests of his Arab opposition in Baghdad. This can be :concluded from the points mentioned below

Firstly, the fact that al-Ma'mun continued to reside in Merv caused complaints amongst the military and administrative groups in Iraq, who had been

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۱- Maqatil, ۳۶۰; al-Yafi'i, al-'Iqd al-Thamm, I, ۴۴۴-۵.

۲- al-Kafi, I, ۴۸۹, VIII, ۱۵۱; 'Uyun, ۱۳۸-۴۰; Tabari, III, ۱۰۱۲-۳.

۳- Khatib, X, ۱۸۴. Concerning Umm Habiba, al-Tabari thinks that she was al-Ma'mun's daughter (Tabari, III, ۱۰۲۹), but Ibn Tulun reports that she was his sister. The age of al-Ma'mun at that time was ۳۰; therefore one is inclined to accept Ibn Tulun's report; Ibn Tulun, op. cit., ۹۷.

the courtiers of Al-Amin (۱۹۳-۱۹۸/۸۰۸-۸۱۴) and who then had to struggle for their economic and regional interests against the Persian vizier of al-Ma'mun, al-Fadl b. Sahl, and his brother al-Hasan b. Sahl(۱).

Because he was busy with this conflict, al-Ma'mun failed to subdue completely the 'Alid rebellion in the Hijaz and Yemen. Therefore, with the encouragement of his vizier, al-Ma'mun installed al-Rid'a as his successor to the caliphate in order to divide the rebels by gaining the support of al-Rid'a's adherents and those who were hoping for the appearance of an inspired 'Alid leader(۲).

Secondly, al-Ma'mun changed the colour of the 'Abbasid emblem from black to green. The latter colour was associated with the Sasanids, whereas the 'Alid emblem was white(۳).

Such a step suggests the influence of the Persian vizier al-Fadl b. Sahl.

Thirdly, by installing al-Rid'a as his successor, al-Ma'mun succeeded in splitting the rebels by gaining the support of al-Rid'a's brothers, who accepted the conciliation of al-Ma'mun and mentioned his name in the khutba along with the name of al-Rid'a. According to al-Tabari, al-'Abbas b. Musa al-Kazim accepted the governorship of Kufa on behalf of al-Ma'mun, a fact which encouraged some of the rebels to mentions the names of al-Ma'mun and al-Rid'a in the khutba.

But the majority of the Kufans insisted on mentioning only al-Rid'a's name or that of any prominent person from the descendants of 'Ali(۴).

Such attitudes indicate the Zaydite inclination of the Kufans. However, the leader of the rebels in Mecca, Ibrahim b. Musd al-Kazim agreed

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۱- al-Ya'qubi, III, ۱۸۵; al-Kamil VI, ۲۲۷.

۲ - Watt, Formative Period ۱۷۶. Al-Kulayni reports that al-Ma'mnn asked al-Rid'a to write to his followers in the areas of revolt, askingthem to stop their support of the rebels; al-Kafi, VIII, ۱۵۱.

۳- Several anecdotes indicate that the 'Alids' standard was white. The followers of Abu al-Saraya were called "al-Mubayyida" in reference to the standard of 'Ali (al-Azraqi, op. cit., I, ۲۶۳-۴). Na un b. Khazim, an Arab advisor of al Ma'mun, warned the latter against adopting the advice of al-Fadl b. Sahl in installing al-Rid'a. He pointed out to him that his vizier was not sincere to the 'Alids, because he suggested the green colour, the sign of his ancestors, the Sasanids, instead of the white, the standard of 'Ali and his sons (J. Wuzara', ۳۱۳). When al-Ma'mun asked al-Rid'a to perform the Friday prayer, the latter wore a white turban and white clothes ('Uyun, II, ۱۴۹). Finally the Imamites narrate that the banners of the followers of al-Qaim al-Mahdi would be white (Najm al-Din al-'Askari, al-Mahdi al-Maw'ud al-Muntazar [Beirut, ۱۹۷۷], I, ۱۷۷).

۴- Tabari, III, ۱۰۱۹-۲۰; also al-Kamil, VI, ۲۴۲.

to mention both his brother alRida and al-Ma'mun in the khutba. For this reason, al-Ma'mun confirmed his office and authorised him to lead the pilgrimage in Mecca(۱).

But a year later, in ۲۰۲/۸۱۷, the caliph gave the governorship of Mecca to an 'Abbasid leader, 'Isa al-Juludi, and dispatched Ibrahim to Yemen to subdue the rebellion there. He also granted him Yemen's governorship. After he had fulfilled this task, Ibrahim set out for Mecca, but during his return he was arrested, as was his brother Zayd, and sent to al-Ma'mun(۲).

Moreover, al-Nawbakhti mentions that a considerable body of the muhaddithun and

Zaydites (the non-revolutionary branch) became Imamites after the installation of al-Rid'a. But the accounts of al-Kashshi and al-Saduq suggest that these same people, for example Hisham b. Ibrahim al-Rashidi, had been used by al-Ma'mun to watch the partisans of al-Rid'a, and this might explain why they returned to their previous faith directly after the death of al-Rid'a in ٢٠٣/٨١٧.(٣)

Fourthly, after he had quashed the 'Alid rebellion, al-Ma'mun decided to go to Baghdad, taking with him al-Rid'a and Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq. During his advance, his vizier. al-Fadl b. Sahl was assassinated, then al-Rid'a died in Tus, probably of poison(٤), and Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq passed away and was buried in Jurjan(٥).

Their mysterious deaths seem to indicate that al-Ma'mun, having used them to fragment the 'Alid opposition, was now moving on to a more rigorous anti- 'Alid programme.

Fifthly, the numerous measures initiated by al-Ma'mun after his arrival at Bahgdad

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١- Tabari, III ١٠٢٩; al-Kamil, VI, ٢٤٨.

٢- al-Ya'qubi, III, ١٨٤, ١٩٠.

٣- N. Firaq, ٧٢-٣; Ikhtiyar, ٥٠١-٢; 'Uyun, II, ١٥١-٢.

٤- Ibn Hibban, Kitab al-Majruhin (Halab, ١٩٧٦), II, ٢٠٩-١٠.

٥- al-Kafi, I, ٤٨٦, ٤٩٠; Muruj, VIII, ٥٧, ٦١; 'Uyun, I, ١٨٦, ١٨٨; Shaban, op. cit., ٤٧.

on Rabi' I ٢٠٤/٨١٩ revealed the political aim of his previous policy. He cast aside the green banner and ordered his subjects to wear the black colour of the 'Abbasids(١). He granted al Rid'a's successor, al-Jawad, two million dirhams(٢), and gave back the district of Fadak to prominent 'Alids, Muhammad b. Yahya b. al-Husayn and Muhammad b. 'Ubayd Allah b. al-Hasan(٣).

Furthermore, the land-tax (al-kharaj) of the sawad was adjusted in favour of the tax-payer. The share of the treasury was to be two-fifths instead of half of the produce(٤).

Through these actions, al-Ma’mun wanted to cut the support given by the prominent ‘Alids and the peasants of the sawad to the revolutionary 'Alid activities, which, according to Abu al-Fida, he had brought to an end. He was also endeavouring to work against his Arab opposition in Baghdad. When he entered the city everything there returned to normal as if the uprising had never occurred.(۵)

Finally, in ۲۰۵/۸۲۰ al-Ma mun started to hold symposiums between the Imamites and the Zaydites, and encouraged them to discuss the question of the Im ama in his presence. It is worth mentioning that the non-revolutionary Zaydites believed in the Imamate of the inferior (al-Mafdul) in spite of the presence of the superior (al-Afdal).

This view was based on the belief that even though ‘Ali b. Abi Talib was the most excellent of the community after the Prophet, he fully recognized the caliphate of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar. Because of this belief of the Zaydites, in

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۱- al-Kamil, VI, ۲۵۳; Ahmad b. Tahir b. Tayfur, Tarikh Baghdad (Cairo, ۱۹۴۹), ۱۰.

۲- ‘Uyun, II, ۱۸۸.

۳- al-Ya’qubi, III, ۲۰۴; according to the account of al-Kulayni both were Imamites and the father of the first, Yahya b. al-Husayn, supported the Imamate of al-Rid’a (al-Kafi, I, ۳۱۶). Al-Najashi reports that the grandson of the second, Yahya b. Ahmad b. Muhammad, was a prominent Imamite in Nishapur; al-Najashi, ۳۴۵; Abu al-Fida, al-Mukhtasar fi Akhbar al-Bashari, II, ۳۲.

۴- Tabari, III, ۱۰۳۹; al-Kamil, VI, ۲۵۳.

۵- Abu al-Fida, op, cit., II, ۲۵-۶.

the discussions with the Imamites, al-Ma’mun often agreed with the viewpoints of Zaydite scholars such as ‘Ali b. al-Him, as regards the Imamate(۱).

Then al-Ma’mun managed to capture the 'Alid rebel ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Ahmad b. ‘Abd Allah b. Muhammad b. ‘Umar b. ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, who rose in arms in Yemen. By subduing this rebellion, alMa’mun ended the last military opposition of the ‘Alids during his rule. Finally, in ۲۰۶/۸۲۱ his real attitude towards the ‘Alids was revealed when

he ordered them to wear black, and announced that all the descendants of Imam ‘Ali b. Abi Talib and their close kindred (al-Talibiyun) should be prevented from entering .(his palace(۲

The development of the Imamite organization (al-Wikala) during the time of al-Jawad .۴

Despite the well-developed status of the Imamite organization during the last period of al-Rid’a's Imamate, he died, leaving a successor only seven years old, thus causing further splits amongst his followers. Al-Mas'udi mentions that because of the age of Muhammad al-Jawad, the ninth Imam, al-Rid’a's followers were confused as to .whether or not he possessed the requisite qualifications for the Imamate

Therefore eighty leading personalities from various provinces, among them al-Rayyan b. al Salt, Safwan b. Yahya, Yunis b. ‘Abd al-Rahman, Muhammad b. Hakim, 'Ali b. al-Hasan al-Wasiti, and Ishaq b. Isma’ il b. Nawbakht, gathered together at the house of ‘Abd al-Rahman b. al-Hajjaj in Baghdad to discuss the validity of al-Jawad's .Imamate

They decided to test his knowledge during the pilgrimage. Two groups concluded that al-Jawad's age precluded his being qualified for the Imamate; the first group supported

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.Tabari, III, ۱۰۴۰ -۱

.Tabari, III, ۱۰۶۲-۳; al-Kama’l, VI, ۲۶۹ -۲

the Imamate of his uncle, Ahmad b. Musa al-Kazim, whereas the second group, including Ibrahim b. Salih alAnmati, joined the Waqifa and held that the seventh Imam .(.was al-Qa’im al-Mahdi(۱

But the rest were satisfied that al-Jawad's knowledge was exceptional and held that he was well qualified in spite of his age(۲). Hence they continued with the affairs of the organization, and sent propagandists from Kufa and Medina to various provinces. According to al-Najashi, many Kufan muhaddithun, such as Muhammad b.

Muhammad b. al-Ash'ath, Ahmad b. Sahl, al-Husayn. b. ‘Ali al-Misri, and Isma’ il b. .Musa al-Kazim, moved to Egypt and carried on their activities there

One of these activities was to circulate the traditions of the Prophet concerning al-.(Qa’im al-Mahdi and the fact that he would be from the progeny of al-Husayn(۳

A narration mentioned by al-Kulayni suggests that they gained considerable adherents there, namely, that ‘Ali b. Asbat al-Kufi came from Egypt to Medina to see al-Jawad so as to describe him to the Imamites in Egypt(۴). Throughout the land of the caliphate the Imamite system of sending out agents (wukala') became more .developed and managed to save their organization from certain disintegration

The Imam's agents spread in many provinces, like al-Ahwaz(۵), Hamadan (۶), Sistan, Bist' (۷), Rayy (۸), Basra(۹), Wasit, Baghdad(۱۰), and the traditional centres of the .(Imamites, Kufa and Qumm(۱۱

They allowed their partisans to work in the ‘Abbasid administration. Thus Muhammad b. Isma'il b. Bazi and Ahmad b. Hamza al-Qummi occupied high ranks in the .vizierate(۱۲), and Nuh b

p: ۷۰

.N. Firaq, ۸۵-۷; Q. Maqalat, ۹۳-۵; al-Najashi, ۱۹ -۱

.Ithbat, ۲۱۳-۵ -۲

.al-Najashi, ۲۱, ۶۷-۸, ۱۴۱, ۲۹۴ -۳

.al-Kafi, I, ۴۹۴ -۴

.al-Najashi , ۱۹۱ -۵

.Ikhtiyar, ۶۱۱-۲; al-Najashi, ۲۶۵ -۶

.al-Kafi, V, ۱۱۱ -۷

.Bihar, L, ۴۴-۵ -۸

.Ikhtiyar, ۴۸۷; al-Najashi, ۱۸۰ -۹

.Ithbat, ۲۱۳, ۲۱۵ -۱۰

.al-Kafi, I, ۵۴۸; T. al-Ghayba, ۲۲۷; Bihar, L, ۳۷-۸ -۱۱

.al-Najashi, ۲۵۴ -۱۲

Darraj was the qadi of Baghdad and then of Kufa. Because his relatives were the agents of al-Jawad, he hid his faith during his occupation of this post(١).

Other Imamites became governors of some ‘Abbasid provinces, such as al-Husayn b. ‘Abd Allah al-Nisaburi, the governor of Bist and Sistan, and al-Hakam b. ‘Alya al-Asadi, the governor of Bahrain. Both of these men paid the khums to al-Jawad while hiding their allegiance to him(٢).

At this stage the underground activities of the agents only aimed at controlling and carrying on the religious and financial affairs of the Imamites, not at endangering al-Ma’mun's rule. However in the year ٢١٠/٨٢٥ the people of Qumm, most of whom were Imamites, appealed to the caliph to reduce their land-tax (al-kharaj), just as he had reduced the kharaj of the inhabitants of Rayy, but he ignored their appeal.

Therefore they refused to pay the kharaj and took control of the affairs of Qumm(٣).

As a result al-Ma’mun dispatched three regiments of his army from Baghdad and Khurasan to quash their revolt. The leader of the Abbasid army, ‘Ali b. Hisham accomplished his task. He demolished the wall of Qumm and killed many people, amongst them Yahya b. ‘Umran, who, according to Ibn Shahr Ashub, was the agent of al-Jawad(۴).

Moreover al-Ma’mun collected seven million dirhams from Qumm's inhabitants as a kharaj instead of the normal amount, which had been two million dirhams before the uprising. The reports of al-Tabari and Ibn al-Athir indicate that some of the leaders

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١- al-Najashi, ٨٠, ٩٨; Mizan, IV, ٢٧۶.

٢- al-Kafi, V, III; al-Tusi, al-Istibsar, II, ۵٨.

٣- al-Azdi, ٣۶٨.

۴- Ibn Shahr Ashub, Manaqib Ali Abi Talib, IV, ٣٩٧; al-Azdi, ٣۶٨.

of this revolt were exiled to Egypt, among them Ja’far b. Dawud al-Qummi(١).

But these measures did not end the military activities in Qumm. According to al-Tabari, Ja’far b. Dawud escaped from Egypt and rebelled in Qumm in ٢١۴/٨٢٩, but his revolt was subdued and he was arrested and banished again to Egypt(٢).

Unfortunately the Imamite sources are silent about these military actions in Qumm and their relationship with the Imamites' organization. But al-Ma’mun linked these activities with al-Jawad. Thus he endeavoured to end them through the Imam. According to al-Azdi and al-Tabari, during his march to invade al-Rum, al-Mam'un summoned al-Jawad and welcomed him in Tikrit in Safar ٢١۵/٨٣٠, where he married his daughter Umm al-Fadl to him.

He asked him to celebrate his marriage in Baghdad, then to go back with his wife to Medina(٣).

But this marriage neither gave al-Ma’mun the support of the Imamites nor stopped the revolts in Qumm. Ja’far b. Dawud managed to escape again from Egypt and rebelled in Qumm in ٢١۶/٨٣١, where he defeated the army sent by alMa’mun and killed its leader ‘Ali b. ‘Isa. He continued his resistance until the end of the year ٢١٧/٨٣٢, when the ‘Abbasid troops ended his uprising and executed him(۴).

But afterwards the underground activities of the ‘Alids increased on a wide scale. Therefore al-Mu’tasim, who succeeded al-Ma’mun to the caliphate in ٢١٨/٨٣٣, was obliged to summon al-Jawad and Muhammad b. al-Qasim al-Talqan, so as to investigate their role in the underground activities.

The latter, on hearing of

١- Tabari, III, ١٠٩٢-٣, ١١٠٢; al-Kamil, VI, ٢۶۴, ٢٩٣.

٢- Tabari, III, ١١٠٢.

٣- Tabari, III, ١١٠٣; al-Azdi, ٣٩٩.

۴- Tabari, III, ١١٠۶, ١١١١; al-Kamil, VI, ٢٨۶-٧.

al-Mu'tasim's decision, escaped from Kufa to Khurasan(١), whereas al-Jawad was

arrested in Medina and taken along with his wife, Umm al-Fadl, to the caliph in Baghdad, where he was put under house-arrest. He died a few months later in Dhu al-Hijja ۲۲۰/۸۳۵. Some Imamite writers claim that his wife Umm al-Fadl poisoned him at the instigation of al-Mu'tasim, but al-Mufid thinks that he died naturally (۲).

In the last few years of al-Jawad's Imamate the system and the tactics of the Imamite agents were highly developed. The Imam's followers in Khurasan allowed themselves to be recruited into the 'Abbasid army and participated in subduing the rebellion of the Khurramiyya. According to al-Tusi, in ۲۲۰/۸۳۴ they seized a large amount of booty from the rebels, so al-Jawad ordered them to pay the khums either to him directly or to his agent (۳).

Al-Jawad himself, on hearing of al-Mu'tasim's command to present himself in Baghdad, asked his representative Muhammad b. Al-Faraj to hand the khums to his son 'Ali al-Hddi as a .sign that he was to be his successor (۴).

۵. The 'Abbasids' Attitude toward the activities of al-Hadi

According to the Imamite sources; the bulk of the followers of alJaw۵d accepted the Imamate of his successor 'Ali al-Hadi, who was then seven years old. His age presented no obstacle to their accepting his Imamate, since they had faced the same problem with his father, who had also been seven years old when he took over the office.

A few of al-Jawad's followers, however, supported the Imamate of his son Musa, but after

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۱ - ... Muhammad b. al-Qasim was the Imam of the revolutionary Zaydites during al-Jawad's period. When al-Mu'tasim endeavoured to arrest him, he escaped from Kufa and revolted in al-Talqan. But al-Mu'tasim captured him and imprisoned him in Samarra. Then he disappeared from jail mysteriously. Thus a considerable body of the Zaydites in the districts of Kufa, Tabaristan, Daylam and Khurasan held that he did

not die but was alive and would rise in arms to fill the earth with justice after it had been filled with tyranny; Muruj, VI, ۱۱۶-۷.

۲- Ithbat, ۲۲۰; Bihar, L, ۱۵-۱۷; al-Irshad, ۲۹۷, ۳۰۷.

۳- al-Tusi, al-Istibsar, II, ۶۰-۲.

۴- Ibn Shahr Ashub, Manaqib, IV, ۳۸۹.

a short time they rejoined the rest of the Imamites, accepting the Imamate of ‘Ali al-Hadi(۱).

At this stage the Imamites concentrated their efforts in reorganising the activities of their followers. This was especially necessary considering the fact that the flourishing state of the 'Abbasid economy had decreased the ‘Alids' opportunities to obtain supporters for further military action(۲).

Perhaps for this reason the caliph, al-Mu'tasim and his successor al-Wathiq (۲۲۷-۲۳۲/۸۴۱-۸۴۶), were more tolerant towards the ‘Alids than al-Ma’mun before them or al-Mutawakkil after them. According to Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani, the descendants of ‘Ali b. Abi Talib and their close kindred (al-Talibiyun) assembled in Samarra where they were paid salaries by the caliph al-Wathiq(۳).

The latter also distributed a large amount of money among the ‘Alids in the Hijaz and other provinces(۴).

After the death of al-Wathiq certain events had serious consequences for the ‘Abbasid attitude towards the activities.of the adherents of the tenth Imam, al-Hadi. Al-Mutawakkil was chosen to the caliphate in ۲۳۲/۸۳۷,(۵) and his installation was seen by the narrators (al-Muhaddithun al-amma) as a major setback for those who favoured the ‘Alids.

The majority of the latter were from the ranks of the Mu'tazila and the Shi’ites, who formed the progressive and indeed radical element in society. Recognising this, al-Mutawakkil carried out certain measures with the aim of destroying the economic and political foundations of both the Mu'tazila and the Shi’ites.

Firstly, he abandoned the"inquisition" (al-Mihna) against the narrators of the amma, which had been implemented by al-Ma mun with the

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.Maqalat, ۹۹ -۱

The flourishing state of the 'Abbasid economy can be noted in al-Mu'tasim's ability -۲ to recruit a new garrison, mainly from the Turks of Caucasus, and to establish a new capital, Samarra. His successor al-Mutawakkil followed in his footsteps, establishing another garrison, which he called al-Shakiriyya, by recruiting people from the western provinces of the empire. Later al-Shakiriyya garrison was enlarged by al-Mutawakkil until it became his official army. Furthermore he established a new capital called al-Ja'fariyya. According to alMas'udi, after his death he left four million dinars and seven .million dirhams in the treasury. Muruj, VII, ۲۷۶-۷; Shaban, op. cit., ۷۶

.Maqalat, ۳۹۴; al-Fakhri, ۱۷۶ -۳

.al-Yaqubi, III, ۲۱۶ -۴

.Tabari, III, ۱۳۶۸ -۵

support of the Mu'tazilites, and he encouraged these narrators and their adherents to .(openly adopt anti-Shi'ite slogans(۱

Secondly, al-Mutawakkil discharged the vizier, al-Zayyat, and his staff from their offices and appointed instead al-Jarjara'i and Ibn Khaqan, who were more inclined to .(go along to with his anti-Shi'ite policy(۲

Thirdly, he decided to rebuild the whole structure of the army in two stages. First he began to gradually weaken the power of the Tahirids, who were in charge of ruling Khurasan and of policing Baghdad and the Sawad. He did this by nominating his three sons, alMuntasir, al-Mu'tazz and al-Mu'ayyad, as his successive heirs apparent, and then appointing al-Muntasir as governor in Ifriqiyya and al-Maghrib, al-Mu'ayyad as governor in Syria, and al-Mu'tazz as ruler of the eastern provinces, in particular .Khurasan

Simultaneously the caliph divided the army in the capital among his sons and sent

them to the provinces to which he had appointed them, so as to prevent any direct conspiracy on the part of the leaders of the army. His second move was to begin to build a new army called alShakiriyya, recruiting people from areas which were well-known for their anti-'Alid attitudes, particularly from Syria, al-Jazira, al-Jabal, Hijaz, and even from the 'Abna , who had rebelled against the "inquisition"(٣).

While carrying out these measures, al-Mutawakkil turned towards the opposition to deal with the organised underground activities of the 'Alids in general and the Imamites in particular. The intellectual activities of the Imamites in Egypt, which had been

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١- Shaban, op. cit., ٧٣; al-Tikriti, al-Mutawakkil boyn Khusumih wa-Ansarih, Bulletin of the College of Arts, Basrah University, ١٩٧۶, ١١٣.

٢- Tabari, III, ١٣٧٣-۵; see also al-Kafi, I, ۴٩٨.

٣- Shaban, op. cit., ٧٢-۵; ٧۶.

encouraged by Isma'il b. Musa al-Kazim, had borne fruit and expanded into the sphere of underground political activities, even penetrating into remote parts of North Africa(١).

The system of communication of their organization (al-Wikala) was highly developed, particulary in the capital Samarra, Baghdad, Mada'in, and the districts of the Sawad(٢).

Furthermore al-Yaqubi's report seems to indicate that the Imamites had hidden the name of their Imam to the extent that the caliph was not sure exactly who he was(٣) or if he had direct links with Shi'ite underground activities.

Al-Mutawakkil instigated a campaign of arrests against the Imamites in ٢٣٢/٨۴۶, accompanied by such harsh treatment that some of the agents of the Imam in Baghdad, Mada'in, Kufa and the Sawad died under torture, while others were thrown into jail(۴).

By these measures the caliph caused serious damage to the communication network within the Wikala. In order to fill the vacuum left by the arrested agents, the Imam had to appoint new agents instead, such as Abu ‘Ali b. Rashid, who was nominated to lead the activites of the Imamites in Baghdad, Mada’in and the Sawad, and Ayyub b. Nuh, who was appointed as the agent of Kufa.

Al-Hadi also provided them with new instructions concerning their duties during this critical situation(۵).

Despite all the Imamite efforts to save their organization, the investigation of the governor of Medina, ‘Abd Allah b. Muhammad, led to the discovery that al-Hadi was in fact behind these activities. He informed al-Mutawakkil, warning him of the danger of al-Hades presence

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۱- Al Mas’udi and Ibn Hazm mention that Ja’far b. Isma’il b. Musa al-Kazim was killed by Ibn al-Aghlab in al-Maghrib during the caliphate of al Mu’tazz (Muruj, VII, ۴۰۴; Ibn Hazm, op. cit., ۶۴), which suggests that Ja’far may have been sent there by his father to preach to the people concerning the ‘Alids' rights to the caliphate.

۲- Ikhtiyar, ۵۱۳-۴.

۳- al-Yaqubi, III, ۲۱۷.

۴- Ikhtiyar, ۶۰۳, ۶۰۷; T. al-Ghayba, ۲۲۶-۷; Bihar, L, ۱۸۳.

۵- Ikhtiyar, ۵۱۳-۴.

in Medina. So the caliph summoned al-Hadi to Samarra in ۲۳۳/۸۴۸, where he kept him under house-arrest(۱).

Two years later the caliph discovered that Egypt and the areas near the tomb of al-Husayn in the Sawad were the strongest centres of the underground communications of the ‘Alids. Therefore he ordered that the tomb of al-Husayn and the houses nearby be levelled to the ground. Then he ordered that the ground of the tomb be ploughed and cultivated, so that any trace of the tomb would be forgotten. Furthermore he issued an order prohibiting people from visiting the tombs of any of the Imams and

.(warning them that anyone found in their vicinity would be arrested(۲)

Al-Mutawakkil also waged another campaign of arrests. Among those taken prisoner was Yahya b. ‘Umar al-’Alawi, who was accused of conspiracy and held in the jail of al-Mutbaq in Baghdad(۳). At the same time al-Mutawakkil ordered the governor of Egypt to deport the Talibiyyin to Iraq, and he did so. Afterwards in ۲۳۶/۸۵۰,(۴) al-Mutawakkil banished them to Medina which had been used as a place of exile for the .‘Alids

Several remarks suggest that al-Mutawakkil went even further in his policy, aiming in the long term to destroy the economic and social status of the ‘Alids, and issued many orders so as to achieve this end. He confiscated the properties of the Husaynids, that is the estate of Fadak, whose revenue at that time, according to Ibn Tawus, was ۲۴,۰۰۰ dinars, and granted it to his

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.Ithbat, ۲۲۵-۶; Bihar, L, ۲۰۹ -۱

Tabari, III, ۴۰۷; Muruj VII, ۳۰۲. Many early sources represent the ‘Abbasid view, and -۲ contemporary scholars claim that the reason behind the demolition of al-Husayn's tomb was that the Shi’ a had made it an alternative centre for pilgrimage (Maqatil, ۳۹۵; al-Tikriti The Religious Policity of al-Mutawakkil 'Ala Allah al-’Abbasi [۲۳۲-۴۷/۸۴۷-۶۸], M. A. Dissertation [McGill University, Canada, ۱۹۶۹], ۵۸, ۶۳). But all the narrations espousing this view are attributed to a single narrator called Ahmad b. al-Ji'd who was a loyal supporter of the ‘Abbasids. Perhaps he gave this interpretation to excuse the action of the caliph, whose aim was to stop the underground activities of the Shi’a, who used their visit to the tomb of al-Husayn as a means of communication. In addition the caliph wanted to eliminate any sign of the grave, which might revive the revolutionary .trends amongst the Shi’a

.Tabari, III, ۱۴۰۴ -۳

.al-Kindi, Wilat Misr, (Beirut, ۱۹۷۲), ۱۷۷-۸ -۴

.(partisan ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Umar al-Bazyar(۱

He also warned the inhabitants of the Hijaz not to have any communication with the ‘Alids or to support them financially. Many people were severely punished because they did so. According to al-Isfahani, as a result of al-Mutawakkil's measures the ‘Alids faced harsh treatment in Medina, where they were totally isolated from other people and deprived of their necessary livelihood(۲).

The caliph also wanted to remove the Shi’ites from the ‘Abbasid administration and to destroy their good standing in public opinion. Al-Mas'udi gives an example of this policy: he mentions that Ishaq b. Ibrahim, the governor of Saymara and Sirawan in the province of al-Jabal, was discharged from his office because of his Imamite allegiance, and that other people lost their positions for the same reason(۳).

According to al-Kindi, al-Mutawakkil ordered his governor in Egypt to deal with the ‘Alids according to the following rules:

۱) No ‘Alid could be given an estate or be allowed to ride a horse or to move from al-Fustat to the other towns of the province.

۲) No ‘Alid was permitted to possess more than one slave.

۳) If there was any conflict between an ‘Alid and a non‘Alid, the judge must first hear the claim of the non-Alid, and then accept it without negotiation with the ‘Alid.(۴)

By these measures, al-Mutawakkil managed to prevent the Shi’ites from plotting against his regime, but he failed to end their underground activities. Reports indicate that al-Hadi continued his communications with his adherents secretly, receiving the

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۱- Ibn Tawus, Kash al-Mahajja (Najaf, ۱۹۵۰), ۱۲۴; al-Sadr, Fadak fi al-Tarrikh (Najaf, ۱۹۵۵), ۲۳.

۲- Maqatil, ۳۹۶.

۳- Muruj VII, ۲۳۸-۹; al-Kafi, I, ۵۰۰.

۴- al-Kindi, op. cit., ۲۳۰.

.(khums and other taxes from his agents in Qumm and its districts(۱

According to al-Mas'udi, al-Mutawakkil was informed about this, and he also heard that in al-Hadi's house there were arms and letters from his supporters indicating a conspiracy against him. Therefore the house was searched by the caliph's soldiers, .(but they did not find any proof, and so al-Hadi was set free(۲

The suppression of the Imamites decreased after the assassination of al-Mutawakkil, who was succeeded by his son al-Muntasir in ۲۴۷/۸۶۱. He was more tolerant toward them than his father. He issued an order to stop the campaign of arrests and the oppression of the ‘Alids and their adherents, and permitted them to visit the tombs of .al-Husayn and the other Imams

He also gave the properties of Fadak back to them. But this new attitude on the part (of the caliph ceased with the succession of al-Mustain in ۲۴۸/۸۶۲.(۳

According to al-Kindi, the Imamites in Egypt were persecuted by its governor, Yazid b. ‘Abd Allah al-Turki, who arrested an ‘Alid leader called Ibn Abi Hudra along with his followers. They were accused of carrying out underground activities and deported to Iraq in ۲۴۸/۸۶۲.(۴) Al-Kulayni also states that the campaign of arrests and pursuits .affected the followers of al-Hadi in Egypt

For example, Muhammad b. Hajar was slain and the estate of Sayf b. al-Layth was .(seized by the ruler(۵

Meanwhile in Iraq some of the followers of al-Hadi in Samarra were arrested(۶), and his main agent in

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۱- Bihar, L, ۱۸۵.

۲- Muruj VII, ۲۰۷.

۳- Ibid, VII, ۳۰۲.

۴- al-Kindi, op. cit., ۲۲۹.

٥- al-Kafi, I, ٥١١, ٥١٣.

٦- Manaqib, IV, ٤١٦.

Kufa, Ayyub b. Nuh, was pursued by the qadi of the city(١).

It appears, however, that the ‘Abbasid oppression did not deter the Shi’ite ambition to reach power. Many historians like al-Isfahani report that ‘Alid revolts broke out in ٢٥٠-١/٨٦٤-٥ in the areas of Kufa, Tabaristan, Rayy, Qazwin, Egypt and Hijaz.

These might have been directed by one group, or to be more accurate, by one leader. It is beyond the scope of this work to deal with the details of these revolts, but it is worth mentioning that the rebels employed the Prophetic traditions concerning al-Qa’im al-Mahdi and the signs of his rising to achieve immediate political success.

According to Ibn ‘Uqda, the leader of this uprising, Yahya b. ‘Umar al-’Alawi, was expected to be al-Qa’im al-Mahdi, because all the signs and events predicted by the sixth Imam, al-Sadiq, regarding the rise of al-Qa’im al-Mahdi occured during the course of that revolution(٢):

قال ابو عبـدالله لا بدان رجل يخرج من ال محمد ولا بدان يمسك الرايه البيضاء. قال على ابن الحسن; فاجتمع اهل بنى رواس و كانوا قد عقدوا عمامه بيضاء على قناه فامسكها محمد بن معروف وقت خروج يحيى بن عمر, و قال ابو عبد الله فى هذا الخبر, و يجف فراتكم فجف الفرات, و قال ايضا; يحونكم قوم صغار الاعين فيخرجونكم من دوركم. و قال على ابن الحسن, فجاءنا كنجور و الاتراك فاخرجوا الناس من ديارهم. و قال ابو عبد الله ايضا; و تجىء السباع الى دوركم. قال على; فجاءت السباع الى دورنا. و قال ابو عبد الله,

p: ٨٠

١- al-Arbili, Kashf al-Ghumma, III, ٢٤٧. The qadi of Kufa at that time was Ja’far b. ‘Abd al-Wahid. The caliph al-Musta’in removed him from this office and exiled him to Basra where he died in ٢٥٧/٨٧٠; Mizan, I, ٤١٣.

٢- Ibn ‘Uqda, op. cit., f. ٧٤-٥.

و كانى بجناءزكم تحفر.و قال على ابن الحسن, فراينا ذلك كله. و قال ابو عبد الله; يخرج رجل اشقر ذو سبال ينصب له كرسى على باب دار عمر بن حريث , يدعوا الناس بى البراءه من على ابن ابى طالب عليه السلام و يقتل خلقا من الخلق و يقتل فى يومه

, فراينا ذلك كله.

This document indicates that the Imamites were expecting the establishment of their state by al-Qa'im al-Mahdi in the near future. Despite the uprising's Zaydite facade, many pure Imamites participated. According to Ibn 'Uqda, the holder of the rebel standard in Mecca was Muhammad b. Ma'ruf al-Hilali (d. ۲۵۰/۸۶۴), who was among the eminent Imamites of the Hijaz(۱).

Furthermore, the leader' of the rebels in Kufa, Yahya b. 'Umar, who was assassinated in ۲۵۰/۸۶۴, attracted the sympathy and praise of al-Hadi's agent, Abu Hashim al-Ja'fari(۲).

In addition al-Mas'udi reports that a certain 'Ali b. Musa b. Isma'il b. Musa al-Kazim took part in the revolt in Rayy and was arrested by the caliph al-Mu'tazz. Since this man was the grandson of the Isma'il b. Musa al-Kazim who had preached the Imamite doctrine in Egypt, it seems extremely probable that the revolt was essentially Imamite(۳).

Moreover, al-Tabari gives information concerning the underground activities of the Imamites and their role in this rebellion, which the authorities considered purely Zaydite rather than Imamite. He also reports that the 'Abbdsid spies discovered correspondence between the leader of the rebels in Tabaristan, al-Hasan b. Zayd, and the nephew of Muhammad b. 'Ali

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۱- - Ibn 'Uqda, op. cit., f. ۷۵; al-Najashi, ۲۸۰-۱. Ibn 'Uqda, Ahmad b. Muhammad (۲۴۹-۳۳۳/۸۶۳-۹۴۴) is a kufan Muhaddith. He belonged to the Zaydite sect, al-Jarudiyya. Al-Nu'mani relied on him in writing his work al-Ghayba. Buzurg, Nawabigh al-Ruwat, ۴۶-۷.

۲- Tabari, III, ۱۵۲۲.

۳- Muruj, VII, ۴۰۴.

(۱) b. Khalf al-'Attar. Both of these men were adherents of the tenth Imam, al-Hadi.

This led the authorities to the conclusion that the Imamites had direct links with the rebels. So they arrested the leading Imamite personalities in Baghdad and deported them to Samarra. Among them were Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-Attar, Abu Hashim al-Ja’fari(۲), and the two sons of al-Hadi, Ja’far and al-Hasan al-’Askari, later to be the eleventh Imam(۳).

One can link these ‘Abbasid precautions to the sudden death of al-Hadi in Samarra in ۲۵۴/۸۶۸, because the authorities believed him to be behind all these disturbances, and felt that his death would bring them to an end(۴).

The cautious attitude of the authorities towards the Imamites continued during the short Imamate of the eleventh Imam, al-Hasan al-’Askari (۲۵۴-۶۰/۸۶۸-۷۴). He was put under house-arrest and his movements were restricted, since he was obliged to present himself at the palace of the caliph in Samarra every Monday and Thursday(۵).

Despite these restrictions, al- ‘Askari managed to communicate with his agents by secret means(۶).

It appears that the continuation of the rebellion of the ‘Alids, who extended their penetration into new areas, was behind the restriction of the Imam's movements. According to al-Tusi, the caliph al-Muhtadi arrested some Imamites in ۲۵۵/۸۶۹, accusing them of the assassination of ‘Abd Allah b. Muhammad al-’Abbasi, who had been murdered by the rebels in Kufa. Al-’Askari was also arrested, but was set free soon after the death of the caliph, al-Muhtadi(۷).

Despite the fact that the eleventh Imam

۱- Tabari, III, ۱۳۶۲, ۱۶۸۳; Ikhtiyar, ۶۸.

۲- Tabari, III, ۱۶۸۳-۴.

۳- T. al-Ghayba, ۱۴۱, ۲۲۶; Bihar, L, ۲۰۶-۷.

۴- The majority of the Imamite scholars believe that al-Hadi was poisoned at the instigation of the ‘Abbasids; Manaqib, IV, ۴۰۱; Bihar, L, ۲۰۶-۷.

.T. al-Ghayba, ۱۳۹-۴۰ -۵

.Manaqib, IV, ۴۲۷-۸; Bihar, L, ۲۸۳-۴ -۶

T. al-Ghayba, ۱۴۷, ۲۲۶; Bihar, L, ۳۰۳; Tabari, III, ۱۷۰۹ -۷

managed to carry out his activities without the knowledge of the authorities until his death in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴,(۱) the policy of housearrest, which had been imposed upon the Imams by the caliph al-Ma'mun and had been continued until the time of al-'Askari, seems to have led him to search for a method by which he could prevent 'Abbasid surveillance being imposed on his son, the Twelfth Imam, so that he could disguise his .identity and carry on his activities in secret(۲)

Conclusion .۶

From the death of al-Husayn onward, the Imams of the Shi'a followed a more or less passive policy towards the ruling caliphs, but this did not indicate their acceptance of the rights of the Umayyads and then the 'Abbasids to the caliphate. Rather they believed that, since these families had come to power through natural means, their downfall would also be according to the will of Allah, that He would indicate their imminent downfall to them and assist them in carrying out His will when the .appropriate time had arrived

Towards this end they were always prepared to rise and take their rightful position, because any Imam could be ordained by Allah as al-Qa'im al-Mahdi. This can be noted ,in the statement of Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib

البيت اهل منا يشاء من الله يجعل والمهدى

Allah will choose the Mahdi, whom He wants, from among us, the People of the" House."(۳)

Thus al-Sadiq, who was strong and capable of leading an uprising might have risen against the caliph if his followers had

.al-Kafi, I, ۵۰۳ . -۱

This will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter -۲

al-Kafi, I, ۴۵۰ -۳

adhered to his instructions, but schisms appeared amongst their ranks and the Imam's aspirations came to naught. A considerable body among al-Sadiq's followers were not satisfied with his political methods, and disassociated themselves from him .in order to struggle for power without his interference

This was manifested in the emergence of the Zaydites and the Isma'ilis, who put forward a new interpretation of the traditions (Ahadith) concerning al-Qa'im al-Mahdi and his rising and used it in their struggle for power. This can be seen in the Zaydite and Isma'ili revolts between the years ۱۴۵-۲۹۶/۷۶۲-۹۰۸, which ended with the establishment of an Isma'ili state and the installation of an Imam with the title al-Mahdi.

The Imams, however, denied the claim of any ‘Alid who claimed that he was al-Qa'im al-Mahdi promised by the Prophet, but they sympathised with some ‘Alid rebels who were loyal to them. This might encourage us to assume that the Imams had two .methods designed to help them reach power

The first was the scholarly, cultural and religious activities which they fostered amongst the people without openly involving themselves in any political activities. Secondly, they secretly supported some Shi'ite rebels who were loyal to them, hoping .that they would hand the power over to them after their success

The military activities of the various Shi'ite groups confused the ‘Abbasids and led them to believe that the Imamite Imams were behind them or at least that the result of their intellectual activities would be militant action. Therefore the ‘Abbasid authorities

.forced the Imams to reside in the capital from the year ۲۰۲/۸۱۷ under housearrest

This policy was imposed upon the Imams al-Rid'a, al-Jawad, al-Hadi, and al-'Askari, and led them to develop the underground system of their organisation (al-Wikala) so that it could function under these difficult conditions.

At the same time this critical situation forced the eleventh Imam, al-'Askari, to search for a method by which he could prevent 'Abbasid surveillance being imposed upon his son, later to be the Twelfth Imam, so as to enable him to disguise his identity and carry on his activities beyond the careful watch of the authorities.

The Imamites' Views concerning the Concealed Imam and His Birth

١. The Schisms Amongst the Adherents of al-Hasan al-'Askari After His Death.

A) Introduction

The Imamate during the life of the last six Imams of the Twelver Imamites (al-Imamiyya al-Ithna 'ashariyya) was distinguised by the many splits which occurred after the death of each Imam, who was considered by the Imamites as one of the twelve Imams, over the recognition of his successor. In spite of these repeated schisms, after a hard struggle each Imam was able to maintain the obedience of the majority of the followers of the previous Imam(١).

Al-Hasan b. 'Ali al-'Askari was born in ٢٣٢/٨٤٥ and died in ٢٦٠/٨٧٤. According to some later Shi'ite sources, he was poisoned through the instigation of the 'Abbasid caliph, al-Mu'tamid(٢).

During the six years of his Imamate, al-'Askari lived in hiding and prudent fear because of the restrictions imposed upon him by his being surrounded by the spies of al-Mu'tamid. This was the reason for his lack of open contact with the

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١- N. Firaq, ٦٥-٦,٧٧,٧٩.

٢- The reports of the early Shi'ite authors like al-Kulayni, Sa'd al-Qummi and al-Mufid did not reveal any external cause for al-'Askari's death (al-Kafi, I, ٥٠٩; Q. Maqalat, ١٠١-

۲, al-Irshad, ۳۷۷, ۳۸۳, ۳۸۹; al-Mufid, al-Muqni'a fi al-Fiqh [Iran, ۱۲۷۴], ۷۲-۵; and his Tashih I'tiqadat al-Imamiyya [Tabriz, ۱۳۷۱], ۶۳,) but the later Shi'ite authors followed al-Tabari, who claimed that the Imam was poisoned or killed. He based this assumption on a tradition whose chain of transmitters related to al-Sadiq, who said "None of us die naturally, but are killed or martyred." (al-Tabarsi, Ilam al-Wara, ۳۴۹; Muhammad b. Ja'far al Tabari, Dala'il al-Imama [Najaf, ۱۳۶۹], ۲۲۳, Ibn Shahr Ashub, Manaqib, IV,۴۲۱; Bihar, L, ۲۳۶-۸, ۳۳۵, Muhammad al-Sadr, Tarikh al-Ghayba al-Sughra [Beirut, ۱۹۷۲], ۲۳۰-۴).

mass of his followers. Only the elite of his adherents were able to communicate with him personally(۱).

The same sources report that in the year ۲۶۰/۸۷۴ the eleventh Imam became ill. As soon as news of his sickness reached al-Mu'tamid, he dispatched five of his special servants to al-'Askari house, ordering them to keep close watch on him.

Thereafter the caliph sent physicians and the Qadi al-Qudat in the company of ten men whom he considered trustworthy, to al-'Askari's house to remain with him and observe his condition and the situation within his home at all times. Al-'Askari's malady became worse and he passed away on ۸th Rabi' I ۲۶۰/۱st January ۸۷۴.

Al-Mu'tamid dispatched Abu 'Isa b. al-Mutawakkil to say the prayer for the dead over the body of al-'Askari. After this rite was completed al-'Askari was buried within the confines of his house in Sirr Man Ra'a (Samarra), next to his father(۲).

According to the early Imamite sources al-'Askari did not leave a publicly acknowledged son, nor did he determine upon or install his successor openly(۳). As al-Mufid says, the Imamites were suffering oppression at the hand of the 'Abbasids, while the caliph, al-Mu'tamid, was searching for al-'Askari's son and trying to arrest him by any means possible.

Moreover, the views of the Imamite Shi'a about him were being circulated, and it was becoming known that they were waiting for him to rise. For this reason al-'Askari had not revealed his son during his lifetime, not even to the greater portion

۱- Ibn Shahr Ashnb, Manaqib, III; ۵۳۳; Ithbat, ۲۶۲; Subhi, Nazariyyat al-Imaina (Cairo, ۱۹۶۹), ۳۹۴.

۲- Al-Kulayni and al-Mufid report the same chain of transmitters for their information about al-'Askari's death (al-Kafi, I, ۵۰۳-۵; al-Irshad, ۳۸۱-۲, ۳۸۹). Al-Nawbakhti agrees with Sad al-Qummi that Abu 'Isa prayed 'Askari's body (N. Firaq, ۷۹; Q. Maqalat, ۱۰۲). But Sad dates al-'Askari's death in Rabi' II, which agrees with al-Mas'udi's report (Ithbat, ۲۴۸). Al Kulayni's report seems to be more reliable that the latter, since it adds several supporting reports.

۳- N. Firaq, ۷۹; Q. Maqalat, ۱۰۲.

of his own adherents(۱).

Because the Imamites were distinguished from other Islamic denominatons by the principle of the designation of the Imam by his predecessor they seem to have found themselves in a critical situation after their Imam's death, since he had not designated his successor openly. Therefore the Imamite jurists had recourse to the traditions of the Prophet and his progeny to determine who was to be the Twelfth Imam.

They found many traditions to support their various claims. Amongst them were transmissions which stated that an Imam could not die without seeing his offspring who would succeed him; that the world cannot be without a Proof(۲); that the Imamate cannot pass to two brothers after al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and that it will be occupied by one of the progeny of 'Ali b. al-Husayn(۳); that the Imam knows who will succeed him and does not die until he gives his testament to his successor(۴); and that the Imamate should belong to the eldest son of the preceding Imam(۵).

These traditions seem to have been adopted by the greater portion of the Imamites, and their interpretation of these traditions led to various viewpoints, which in turn led to new divisions amongst the Imamites.

Sa'd al-Qummi counted fifteen schisms, whereas al-Nawbakhti and al-Mufid

enumerated them as fourteen. Al-Mas'udi thinks that there were twenty sects, while al-Shahristani counts only eleven(۶). Nevertheless a study of the claims of these .factions reveals that there were apparently only five major schisms

However, each of these became further split

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.al-Irshad, ۳۸۹-۹۰; Kama'l (Tehran ۱۳۷۸/۱۹۵۸), I, ۱۰۱ -۱

Al-Barqi and al-Kulayni mention many traditions with different chains of - ۲ transmitters asserting that the world cannot be without a Proof (Hujja); al Barqi, al-Mahasin (Tehran, ۱۳۷۰/۱۹۵۰), ۹۲, ۲۳۴-۶; al-Kafi, I, ۱۷۸-۸۰, ۵۱۴; see also Dala'il, ۲۲۹-۳۰; .Ahmad b. 'Ali al-Tabarsi, al-Ihtijaj (Najaf, ۱۹۶۶), II, ۴۸-۹, ۷۸

.al-Kafi, I, ۲۸۵-۶; al-Ghayba, ۱۴۶ -۳

.al-Kafi, I, ۲۷۶-۷ -۴

.Q. Maqalat, ۱۰۹ -۵

Because of the way al-Shahristani classifies his information on these schisms, it - ۶ seems that his study is based on the works of al-Nawbakhti and al-Ash'ari. Al... Nawbakhti deemed the Imamite sub-divisions to be as many as fourteen, although his work in its present form counts only thirteen. Fortunately al Mufid, who discusses the various factions on the authority of al-Nawbakhti, mentions the fourteenth faction, which is missing from al-Nawbakhti's work. Al-Mas'udi does not give any details on the splits. Later al-Nawbakhti's work became more circulated than Sa'd al-Qummi's work, because the latter contains opinions on the occultation which contrast with the official opinion of the later Imamites from the fifth/eleventh century onwards; al-Qummi's book was gradually withdrawn from these circles; N. Firaq, ۷۹; .al-Fusul al-Mukhtara, ۲۵۸-۶۰; Muruj, VIII, ۵۰, Milal, ۱۳۰-۱

over the theological and traditional arguments employed to support their claims. At any rate it seems important to set down the major claims of these schisms in order to .achieve a clear conception of the Imamites at that time

B) Schism I: the Waqifa at al-'Askari

What brought the people of this faction together was their claim that the eleventh Imam, al-'Askari, was al-Qa'im al-Mahdi although they differed as to how he became .al-Qa'im

i) The first faction of this schism deemed that al- 'Askari had not died, but had gone into occultation(١). They based their assumption on the traditions reported from the previous Imams, which said that an Imam could not die without having a publicly .(acknowledged son to succeed him, because the world cannot be without a Proof(٢

While the people were not obliged to accept the Imamate of those who were now laying claim to it, they should acknowledge the Imamate of al'Askari whose Imamate had been confirmed by the testament of the former Imam. They also maintained that .they had a tradition which said that al-Qa'im had two occultations

Therefore, since al-'Askari had not left a publicly acknowleged son and since the earth cannot remain for an hour without a Proof, it was right to claim that he had not died .but was hidden, and that he was truly al-Qa'im

This was his first occultation, after which he would rise again. Then, when his rising .(became known, he would conceal himself once more in his second occultation(٣

In their discussions with their opponents, they tried to

p: ٨٨

.Kama'l, ۴٠ -١

.al-Kafi, I, ١٧٨-٨٠, ۵١۴ -٢

.Q. Maqalat, ١٠۶; N. Firaq, ٧٨-٨٠; Milal, ١٢٩ -٣

distinguish themselves from the Imamites who had stopped at the seventh Imam, Musa al-Kazim (١٨٣/٧٩٩), claiming he was al-Qa'im al-Mahdi, by faulting them for stopping at al-Kazim. They pointed out that he had died and left his successor, 'Ali al-Rid'a (٢٠٢/٨١٧) as well as other sons, while al-'Askari had obviously passed away and .(left no heir(١

ii) The second faction of the Waqifa at al-'Askari believed that he had died, but was then raised to life, and was al-Qa'im al-Mahdi Basically, the members of this faction established their doctrine on a transmission from Imam Ja'far al-Sa'diq, who said that al-Qa'im was called al-Qa'im because he would "rise" again after his death. They stated that it was certain that al-'Askari had died without leaving a successor and .without designating anyone as his legatee

Thus there was no doubt about his being al-Qa'im, nor about his being alive after death, although he concealed himself for fear of his foes. They supported their theories with a saying of Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib, contained in his advice to his follower Kumayl b. Ziyad, "O Allah, indeed You do not leave the earth without a Qaim with proof from You, whether manifest or hidden, for then Your proofs and Your signs (would be invalidated."(۲

On the basis of 'Ali's words they concluded that al-'Askari was absent and hidden, but that he would rise to fill the earth with peace and justice after it had been filled with .(tyranny(۳

iii) Al-Waqifa al-la Adriyya also stopped

p: ۸۹

.Q. Maqalat, ۱۰۶-۱۰۷ -۱

al-Kaji, I, ۱۷۸; al-Sharif al-Radi (ed.), Nahj al-Bahagha (Beirut, ۱۹۶۷), ۴۹۷; N Firaq, ۸۰- -۲ .۱

.Q. Maqalat, ۱۰۷ -۳

at al-'Askari. They deemed that he had died and had been the Imam. Although the earth could not be without a Proof from Allah, they were not sure who had succeeded al-'Askari, his son or his brother. Therefore they stopped at the Imamate of al-'Askari, .(and decided to make no decision until the matter became clear to them(۱

Unfortunately, the contemporary sources do not mention anyone as representing the three factions of al-Waqifa at al-'Askari. However, from the doctrine of the first

faction of the Waqifa, it seems that its partisans lived in places which were far from Samarra, the city of the Imam. Since they were not present at the moment of his death, they tended to believe that he had not in fact died, but was al-Qa'im al-Mahdi.

C) Schism II: The Ja'farites

The representatives of this schism claimed that the Imam after al'Askari was his youngest brother, Ja'far, but they differed as to how the Imamate had passed on to him, and therefore split into four factions.

i) The first faction believed that al- 'Askari had died and that he had held the Imamate by the testament of his father. Since the Imamate can only pass to the eldest living son of the former Imam, the Imamate passed from 'Ali al-Hadi not to his eldest son Muhammad, who had died before him, but to al-'Askari, who was the elder of the two sons who had outlived their father(٢).

This faction believed that al-'Askari had not left a publicly acknowledged son to take over the Imamate

p: ٩٠

١- N. Firaq, ٨٩-٩٠.

٢- Q. Maqalat, ١١١; al-Fusul al-Mukhtara, ٢٥٩.

and, therefore, his sole remaining brother, Ja'far, was the Imam. In order to support their dogma they were obliged to repeat the Fathiyya's(١) arguments about the Imamate. The latter claimed that Musa al-Kazim received the Imamate, not from his father Ja'far al-Sadiq, but from his eldest brother 'Abd Allah, according to the tradition which says that the Imamate passes on to the eldest son of the Imam when he dies.

Like the Fathiyya, this faction of the Ja'farites accepted the authenticity of the tradition which says that the Imamate will not fall to two brothers after al-Hasan and al-Husayn. But they maintained that this could only be applied if al-'Askari had left a son. Since al-'Askari had passed away without leaving a publicly acknowledged successor, his brother Ja'far was the designated Imam(٢) and the Imamate would

.pass on in his offspring

They also recognised ‘Abd Allah b. Ja’far al-Sadiq as the seventh Imam. Consequently .Ja’far was thirteenth in the chain of Imams

ii) The second faction of the Ja’farites contended that the eleventh Imam had himself designated Ja’far as his successor according to the principle of al-Bada'(٣). The same thing had happened in the case of Ism'a'il, the eldest son of Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq. God had clarified His ultimate decision concerning him by taking away his soul and placing .his brothers ‘Abd Allah and Musa consecutively in the Imamate instead

Similarly, in the case of Ja’far b. ‘Ali, God had entrusted al-’Askari with the Imamate, but thereafter He had made it

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Al-Fathiyya: A Shi’ite sect which arose after the death of Ja’far al-Sadiq, the sixth - ١ Imam, who contended that the Imamate had passed on from al-Sadiq not to Musa but to his eldest son, ‘Abd Allah, accordingto thetradition which says that the Imamate can only be vested in the eldest son, with the condition that he should be free from any bodily defects (al-Kafi, I, ٢٨٥; Ikhtiyar, ٢٨٢-٣). They were also called al-Fathiyya as an allusion either to ‘Abd Allah b. Jaf'ar because he had broad feet or was broad-headed, or it referred to their leader, who was called ‘Abd Allah al-Aftah: N. Firaq ٦٥; .al-Fusul al-Mukhtara, ٢۴٨-٥١; Ikhtiyar, ٢٥۴

.N. Firaq, ٩٣; Q. Maqalat, ١١١-٢ -٢

Al-bada' means the appearance of something or some knowledge after it has been -٣ concealed. In theological terms, it is a dogma which deals with the question of whether or not it is possible for God to change His decision about something. The theologians maintain that this is impossible, even if it often appears to happen, as for example when Ja’far al-Sadiq designated Isma’il as his successor according to God's command. For when Isma’il died, God then ordered Ja’far to designate Musa al-Kazim as his successor. So it seems that God changed his decision about who was to succeed Ja’far. But in fact, God's eternal knowledge never changes. What changes is

the degree to which men are cognizant of that knowledge. Hence the doctrine of al-bada' states that God's ultimate judgement about something often appears to men only after first having been concealed. It declares that God cannot have changed His decision, for that would imply that His knowledge changes, or that He was ignorant and then gained knowledge. Finally, the Imamites hold that Goes does allow certain people to have knowledge of His ultimate judgement. Bandar, A., ‘Aqidat al-Bada' .(Baghdad, ۱۹۷۶); also a letter from the author dated ۱۵th January ۱۹۷۸

clear that the Imamate should not pass on in the progeny of al-’Askari. Therefore He transferred it to his brother Ja’far, who was the Imam after al-’Askari's death. Like the previous factions, this faction used the argument and dogma of the Fathiyya to .support their viewpoint

This sect was probably more popular than the first among the theologians, especially in Kufa. Its leader was a Kufi theologian called ‘Ali b. Tahl or al-Talhi al-Khazzaz, who had been famous amongst the surviving members of the Fathiyya for his skill in theological discussions. He upheld Ja’far's Imamate and encouraged people to take his side. He was supported in his propaganda by the sister of Faris. b. Hatim b. Mahawiyya al-Qazwini, although she rejected the Imamate of al- ‘Askari and claimed .(that the Imamate had been transferred to Ja’far from his father, ‘Ali al-Hadi(۱

She may have had this claim because her brother, Faris b. Hatim, was killed on the order of al- ‘Askari(۲). It is also possible that the Kufan scholastic family Banu Faddal, who were active supporters of the Fathiyya, adopted the doctrine of this faction, especially Ahmad b. al-Hasan b. ‘Ali b. Muhammad b. Faddal, who died in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴, and .his brother ‘Ali

iii) The members of this faction claimed that the Imamate had passed on to Ja’far through the designation of his father. They based their doctrine on a tradition attributed to Ja’far al-Sadiq, which states that the Imamate cannot be held by two ,brothers after al-Hasan and al-Husayn(۳). Since Muhammad

۱- N. Firaq, ۹۹; al-Shahristani's information concerning this sect is confused. He claims that Faris b. Hatim, not his sister, was a follower of Ja’far, but Faris had been assassinated by the order of al-Askari himself; see Milal, ۱۲۹; Ikhtiyar, ۵۲۴.

۲- For the dogma of Faris b. Hatim, his political activities in Qazwm and Samarra, and his assassination, see Ikhtiyar, ۵۲۲-۸; al-Najashi, ۲۳۸; T. al-Ghayba, ۲۳۸.

۳- Al-Nawbakhti and al-Qummi mention that a group maintained that Ja’far was the Imam after al-’Askari not by the testament of his brother but by that of his father. Thus they held that the adoption of the Imamate of al-’Askari was incorrect and that people should go back to the Imamate of Ja’far; N. Firaq, ۸۲-۳; Q. Maqalat, ۱۱۰-۱; al-Fusul al-Mukhtara, ۲۵۹.

the eldest son of ‘Ali al-Hadi, died during the lifetime of his father, and since the Imamate should belong to those who survive the death of their father, it had not been transferred to Muhammad.

They may have accepted the Imamate of al-’Askari because he was the eldest son after the death of his father, but they rejected his Imamate after his death, because he had passed away without leaving a publicly acknowledged son as his successor. It was a matter of course to them, they said, that the Imam could not die without leaving a publicly acknowledged and well known successor, designated by him and entrusted with the Imamate.

Therefore the claim of al-’Askari to the Imamate must be invalid. So it was inevitable that the Imam was Ja’far, by the designation of his father(۱).

It is worth mentioning that this faction existed within the lifetime of al- ‘Askari. When the tenth Imam died in ۲۵۴/۸۶۸ the majority of his followers accepted the Imamate of his eldest surviving son, al‘Askari, as confirmed by the testament of his father, but a minority took Ja’far's side(۲). He became more powerful after al- ‘Askari's death, since some of al- ‘Askari's adherents abandoned his Imamate and accepted that of Ja’far. A leading scholar of this faction was ‘Ali b. Ahmad b. Bashshar, who wrote a book on the Ghayba and disputed fiercely with his opponents(۳).

There is some evidence that this faction achieved a certain degree of success by

persuading a few of the

.For this tradition see al-Kafi, I, ۲۸۵-۶; T. al-Ghayba, ۱۴۶ -۱
N. Firaq, ۷۹; Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Qubba, al-Insaf fi al-Imams, quoted -۲ .in Kama’l, ۵۵
.Kama’l, ۵۱-۳ -۳

people who had accepted al- ‘Askari's Imamate to join their side. Al-Saduq and al-Majlisi report a letter attributed to the Twelfth Imam, and sent to his agent, ‘Uthman b. Sa’id al-’Umari. This letter reveals that an' adherent of this faction argued with a Twelver called al-Mukhtar, and succeeded in making him accept the Imamate of Ja’far(۱). The sister of Faris b. Hatim, who was mentioned above, was one of the .partisans of this group

iv) The followers of this faction were called al-Nafisiyya. They believed that the tenth Imam had designated his eldest son Muhammad as his legatee. Then, according to .the principle of Bada', Allah took away his life while his father was still alive

But when Muhammad b. ‘Ali passed away, by the order of his father, he designated his brother Ja’far as his successor. He entrusted his testament, the books, the secret knowledge and the weapons needed by the community to his trustworthy young slave called Nafis. And he ordered him to hand them 'over to his brother Ja’far when .his father died

However, when Muhammad died, the adherents of al-’Askari discovered the secret arrangement and the role of Nafis. Since Nafis was afraid of them and feared that the Imamate might be cut short, he called Ja’far and handed over the trust of Muhammad b. ‘Ali al Hadi. Ja’far himself claimed that the Imamate had been passed to him from .(his brother, Muhammad(۲

The members of this faction denied the testament of al-Hasan al-’Askari, because his ,father

.Kama'l, ۵۱۱; Bihar, LIII, ۱۹۰-۱ -۱

Q. Maqalat, ۱۱۲-۳; N. Firaq, ۸۸-۹, Ibn Qubba, op. cit., quoted in Kama'l, ۵۹. About Ibn -۲ .Qubba and his work see al-Najashi, ۲۹۰-۱, T. al-Fihrist, ۲۹۷-۸

they claimed, had neither designated him nor changed his testament from .(Muhammad. Nafis was killed by being drowned in a well(۱

D) Schism III: The Muhammadiyya

This sect denied the Imamate of Ja'far and al-'Askari and considered Muhammad, who had died in the lifetime of his father, as their Imam. They argued that 'Ali al-Hadi, the tenth Imam, had neither designated nor indicated either al-'Askari or Ja'far as his .legatee. Therefore neither of them had any right to make claims upon the Imamate

Since the Imam could not die without leaving a successor, and since al-'Askari had passed away and not left a publicly acknowledged or well-known son, his Imamate was invalidated. Ja'far, they added, was not worthy of putting forward a claim because his immorality and sinfulness were infamous. His wicked character could not be prudent fear (Taqiyya) in the face of his enemies, for Taqiyya cannot be practiced .by committing sins

They concluded that since it was forbidden for the Imamate to be nullified, they were obliged to return to the Imamate of Muhammad b. 'Ali, since he had left offspring and his acts were distinguished by probity and virtue(۲). Others of them even considered .(him as al-Qaim al-Mahdi(۳) and some of them went as far as to deny his death(۴

E) Schism IV: The Qat'iyya

This faction constituted the greater portion of the Imamites. They believed that al-'Askari had died and left a son to succeed him, but they differed about the day of his birth, his name, and whether or not he was al-Qa'im al-Mahdi. For this reason they

.Q. Maqalat, ١٠٣ -١

.Q. Maqalat, ١٠٩ -٢

.N. Firaq, ٨۴ -٣

.T. al-Ghayba, ١٢٨-٩; al-Fusul al-Mukhtara, ٢۵٩ -۴

:split into six groups

i) The first group maintained that al- 'Askari had died and left a son called Muhammad. According to Sa'd al-Qummi, they held that his son had come of age, while, according to al-Nawbakhti and al-Shahristani, they believed that he had been born two years before his father's death. He was the Imam because his father had designated him so, and because it was well-known that al- Askari had left no other son. So inevitably .he was the Imam and al-Qa'im

But due to fear of his uncle, Ja'far, he went into concealment and this became one of his occultations. This group built their doctrine on a tradtion attributed to Ja'far al-Sadiq, which says that al-Qa'im's date of birth is hidden from the people, information .(concerning him is obscure, and the people cannot know him(١

Unfortunately little is known about this faction, but al-Saduq, while trying to prove the birth of the Twelfth Imam, mentions traditions which are presumably attributed to this faction's adherents. One of these was called Ya'qub b. Manfush, who claimed that he had visited al-'Askari and asked him about his successor. Al-'Askari showed him his son, who was between eight and ten years old, indicating that his son would succeed him. Another was called Daw' b. Ali al-'Ijli, who maintained that he had met al-'Askari .(in his house where he saw his son, who was then two years old(٢

ii) The members of this group held the same dogma as the previous faction. They agreed

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.Q. Maqalat, ١١۴; N. Firaq, ٨۴-۵; Milal, ١٣٠ -١

.Kama'l, II, ٧٨, ١٠٩-١٠; see al-Galbaygani, op. cir, ٣۵۶ -٢

with them on the death of al- ‘Askari, but they thought that he had left a successor whose name was not Muhammad but 'Ali. They said that al-’Askari had no son except 'Ali, who had been seen by his father's trustworthy followers. According to Sa’d al-Qummi this sect had few adherents and they were concentrated within the suburbs of .the Sawad of Kufa(۱)

iii) This sect held that the Imam after al-’Askari was his son, who had been born eight months after his father's death and had then gone into concealment. They argued that those who claimed that a son was born to him during his lifetime were making false statements, because al- ‘Askari had died without leaving a publicly .acknowledged son

But the pregnancy had been known to the caliph as well as other people, and for this reason the caliph delayed dividing his share in the state until the pregnancy was proved invalid. In fact, they said, the son was born eight months after the death of his .father and was ridden, and his father had ordered that he be called Muhammad

They based their doctrine on a tradition attributed to the eighth main, ‘Ali b. Musa al-Rid’a, which says, "You would test the foetus which is within the womb of his mother, and the suckling child."(۲)

iv) The partisans of this faction held that al-’Askari had no sons at all. The arguments about a hidden son, who was born during the lifetime of al- ‘Askari, were rejected by

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۱- Q. Maqlat, ۱۱۴; T. al-Ghayba, ۱۴۷; al-Mufid also mentions this faction but thought that they held the same dogma as al-Qat’iyya (The Twelvers); al-Fusul al-Mukhtara, .۲۵۹-۶۰

۲- Q. Maqalat, ۱۱۴; N. Firaq, ۸۵; al-Fusul al-Mukhtara, ۲۶۱; Milal, ۱۳۰.

them, because they had searched for him during the life of the eleventh Imam using .various means, but had failed to find him

But since the Imam cannot die without leaving an heir, they claimed that a slave girl had conceived a child belonging to al- 'Askari, and that when she gave birth to him he would be the Imam, even if, as they are reported to have said by al-Mufid, the pregnancy should last a hundred years. They established their doctrine on a tradition of al-Sadiq, which states that al-Qa'im is he whose conception and date of birth are hidden from the people(۱).

v) This faction held that the Imam after al- 'Askari was his son Muhammad, who was the Awaited One (al-Muntazar). They claimed that he had died but would rise to life with the sword to fill the earth with peace and justice after it had been filled with tyranny and injustice(۲).

This group is mentioned neither by Sa'd al-Qummi nor by al-Nawbakhti. Presumably the latter dealt with it but this discussion was later dropped from his work, since al-Mufid who based his information on al-Nawbakhti's work, mentions this group in al'Uyun wa-l-Mahasin(۳).

vi) This group, entitled the Imamiyya by Sa'd al-Qummi and al-Nawbakhti, held that al- 'Askari had died and that inevitably Allah's Hujja on earth was his son. He was his sole successor and legatee, charged with the affairs of the Imamate after him in accordance with the method laid down by previous tradition. Thus the Imamate

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۱- Al-Nawbakhti's information about this sect is confused, whereas al-Qummi and al-Mufid are much clearer in their presentation; N. Firaq, ۸۵-۶; Q. Maqalat, ۱۱۴-۵; al-Fusul al-Mukhtara, ۲۶۰.

۲- T. al-Ghayba, ۶۰.

۳- al-Fusul al-Mukhtara, ۲۶۰.

should pass on to his offspring until the Day of Resurrection, but he was absent and hidden by an order.

It was prohibited to seek him out before he chose to manifest himself, because his

adherents would endanger his life and thier own if they looked for him. In spite of his occultation a few reliable followers could contact him(١). He was born on ١٥th Sha'ban (٢٥٦/٢٩th July ٨٦٨.(٢

Basically this group directed their arguments against those factions which supported the Imamate of Muhammad and Ja’far. With the partisans of Muhammad they argued that the Imamate could be held neither by the descendants of Muhammad, who had died during his father's lifetime, nor by his legatee, such as his brother or someone else, because there was no evidence or proof for accepting the Imamate of a son who had died before his father. Perhaps this argument was also directed .against the Nafisiyya

Presumably with the Jac farites they argued that the Imamate could not pass from brother to brother after al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and that the Imamate should fall to the eldest son of the preceding Imam. The eleventh Imam al- ‘Askari, was designated by the testament of his father, so the Imamate had to pass to his offspring(٣). They also said tht it was improper for the faithful to select an Imam for themselves. Allah .(had to choose him and to manifest him at the proper time(۴

This faction constituted the majority of the Imamites who had accepted the Imamate -of al

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١- Q. Maqalat, ١٠٢-۴; Abu Sahl al-Nawbakhti, Kitab al-Tanbih, quoted in Kama’l, ٨٨; al- .Insaf quoted in Kama’l, ۶١

٢- This group dated his birth as mentioned but the later Imamites differ about it. Ibn Rustam al-Tabari dates it as ١٥th Sha'ban ٢٥٧, while al-Kulayni mentions several traditions giving the dates ٢٥٢,٢٥٥ and ٢٥۶ respectively. Al-Saduq and al Mufid follow al-Kulayni on this point. Some of the factions opposed to the Imamites may have abandoned their claims and joined the Imamites, who then accepted their differing transmissions concerning the birth of the Twelfth Imam; al-Kafi, I, ٥١۴-١۶; Dala'il, ٢٧١; .al-Fusul al-Mukhtara, ٢٥٨; Kama’l, ۴٣٠

.al-Insaj; quoted in Kama'l, ۵۵-۶ -۳

.N. Firaq, ۹۰-۹۱ -۴

Askari, such as Abu Sahl Isma'il b. 'Ali al-Nawbakhti, al-Hasan b. Musa al-Nawbakhti,' Sa'd b. 'Abd Allah al-Ash'ari al-Qummi (the author of Kitab al-Maqalat wa-l-Firaq), .('Uthman b. Said al- Umari and his son Muhammad(۱

F) Schism V: The Cessation of the Imamate

This group held that from the moment al-'Askari died there was no longer an Imam. Al-Nawbakhti, al-Mufid and al-Shahristani considered this group as one faction, whereas Sa'd al-Qummi was presumably more accurate when he divided it into two(۲), since the partisans of this schism agreed on the death of al-'Askari and the cessation of the Imamate, while they differed on the dogma of al-Qa'im al-Mahdi as :follows

i) The first group deemed that it had been confirmed by successive transmission that al-Askari would die without leaving a successor. For this reason there was no Imam after al-'Askari and the Imamate ceased. This, they contended, was reasonable and permitted. Since the cessation of the prophecy after Muhammad was possible, the .cessation of the Imamate was also possible

They established their doctrine on a transmission attributed to the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq, which states that the earth cannot be without a Proof unless Allah becomes angry at the sins of His creatures and retains him from them for as long as He wills. .(This group did not believe in the rising of al-Qa'im al-Mahdi(۳

ii) The people of the second group held the same doctrine as the previous faction, but they separated from them over the dogma of al-Qa'im al-Mahdi They said that since al-'Askari had passed away without leaving

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.Ibn al-Nadim, al-Fihrist, (Tehran, ۱۹۷۲), ۲۲۵; Kama'l, ۴۸۲; Q. Maqlat, ۱۰۶ -۱

.Milal, ۱۳۰-۱; N. Firaq, ۸۸-۹ -۲

.Q. Maqalat, ۱۰۷-۸ -۳

a successor, the Imamate had ceased until Allah raised the Qa'im from among the Imams who had died, such as al-Hasan al- ‘Askari, or from among any of his .descendants

Furthermore the rising of al-Qa’im al-Mahdi was inevitable because this was confirmed by successive tradition. They considered the period after the death of al-‘Askari and the rise of al-Qa’im as an interval of time devoid of prophecy and .(Imamate, like the period between Jesus and Muhammad(۱

There is some evidence that many people from various countries doubted the existence of the Twelfth Imam, such as Muhammad b. Ali b. Mahzayar al-Ahwazi from al-Ahwaz(۲), and many of the persons from Banu Taalib in Medina who had been .(agents of the eleventh Imam(۳

G) Conclusion

This historical and theological survey suggests that on the death of al- Askari, the Imamites fell into problems similar to those which had beset them after the death of the seventh Imam, Musa al-Kazim. They split into al-Waqifa, Muhammadiyya, :Ja’fariyya and Qat’iyya. Possibly the causes of this split were as follows

i) Although the bulk of the Imamites accepted the Imamate of al‘Askari, they retained their cultural and sectarian backgrounds. For example, al- Askari himself had allowed his adherents to accept the traditions related by the Banu Faddal, who belong to the .Waqifa Musa al-Kazim, but had urged them to reject their doctrine

The influence exerted by these cultural ties can be noted in the traditional arguments held by the Imamites after the death of al‘Askari, arguments which led

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.Q. Maqalat, ۱۰۸-۹; T. al-Ghayba, ۱۴۷ -۱

.Kama’l, ۴۸۵,۴۸۷ -۲

.al-Kafi, I, ۵۱۸-۹ -۳

.to the rise of the Waqifa at al-'Askari and the encouragement of the Ja'farites

ii) Despite its developed system the Imamite organization (al-Wikala) did not widely disseminate the testament of Imam al- Askari concerning his successor amongst the populace and the lower missionaries. The organization may have acted in this way because of the tense political situation. Thus no successor was openly indicated by .al-'Askari, nor was any well-known to the general mass of the Imamites

For this reason the Imamites who knew nothing about alAskari's testament had recourse to the traditions adopted by the majority of the Imamites to determine who was to be the Twelfth Imam. The interpretation of these traditions led to various different points of view which, in turn, led to new sub-divisions amongst the Qat'iyya .and the Muhammadiyya

iii) The third cause contributing to these divisions was the personal ambition of al-'Askari's brother, Ja'far, who claimed the Imamate during the lifetime of al- 'Askari. Ja'far became more powerful after the death of his brother, because he was encouraged by the Fathiyya, in order to vindicate their doctrine, and especially by Banu Faddal in Kufa. However Ja'far's success did not continue, because his followers differed as to how he gained the Imamate, and because their arguments in the field .of traditions were weaker than those of the Qat'iyya

Thus, as al-Mufid and al-Tusi state, all these divisions and splits gradually vanished, .(except for the Qat'iyya, who became the Twelvers in the fourth/tenth century(۱

The Question of the Birth of the Twelfth Imam .۲

point

The possibility that the Twelfth Imam

.T. al-Ghayba, ۱۴۲-۶; al-Fusul al-Mukhtara, ۲۶۱ -۱

was born and his birth was kept hidden is supported by a number of narrations. The fact that there were already narrations about the Twelfth Imam as al-Qa'im al-Mahdi gave rise to other narrations which can only be described as hagiographical. But from the time of al-Sadug onwards, even these were accepted by the Imamites as .historical facts

Nevertheless, other early narrations present his birth as a purely historical fact .without the embellishment of miraculous reports

A) The Origin of the Mother of the Twelfth Imam

The earliest Imamite scholar to give an account of the Twelfth Imam's mother is al-Mas'udi. He reports that she was a slave-girl called Narjis(۱). Al-Shahid (d. ۷۸۶/۱۳۸۴) states that her name was Maryam b. Zayd al-'Alawiyya (۲), and other reports give her name as Rayhana, Saqil and Sawsan.ss It is possible that her name was in fact Narjis and the other names, except Saqil, were given to her by her owner Hakima bint Muhammad al-Jawad. People at that time used to call their slave-girls by different names as a form of flattery, and Narjis, Rayhana and Sawsan are all names of .flowers

The earliest report concerning the nationality of the Twelfth Imam's mother goes back to the year ۲۸۶/۸۹۹. This was written down for the first time by al-Saduq, on the authority of Muhammad b. Bahr al-Shaybani, who attributed his narration to Bishr b. Sulayman al-Nakhkhas. According to this report she was a Christian from Byzantium .(who had been captured by Islamic troops(۳

.She was sold as a slave and bought by al-Nakhkhas in the slave-market in Baghdad

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Ithbat, ۲۴۸. For the later authors who named her as Narjis see al-Irshad, ۳۹۰; T. al- -۱ .Ghayba, ۱۵۳, ۱۵۸; 'Uyun, ۳۲-۳

.Bihar, LI, ۲۸, quoted from al-Dirus -۲

.Kama'l, ۴۳۱-۲ -۳

Al-Nakhkhas sent her to the tenth Imam, ‘Ali al-Hadi, in Samarra. After this, however, the narration begins’ to lose much of its credibility and becomes hagiographical. It is related that she was Malika b. Yashshu', the granddaughter of the Emperor of Byzantium, whose mother was a descendant of Simon (Sham' un) the disciple of .Jesus

When Malika was in her grandfather's palace, she dreamt that she saw Jesus's mother, Mary, and Muhammad's daughter, Fatima. In this dream Fattima converts .(her to Islam and persuades her to allow herself to be captured by Islamic troops(۱

The authenticity of this narration is questionable in many aspects, the most doubtful .points being found in the last part

Firstly there was no major battle between the ‘Abbasids and the Byzantines after ۲۴۲/۸۵۶(۲) and there is no indication in the sources that the Emperor of Byzantium .appealed to the ‘Abbasids to liberate his granddaughter

Secondly, the early Imamite authors, particularly al-Qummi, al-Nawbakhti, al-Kulayni and al-Mas'udi, who were contemporaries of al-Shaybani, the narrator of this report, do not refer to it in their works. In addition, al-Kashshi, who was a companion of al-Shaybani, and the later scholars al-Najashi and Ibn Dawud claim that he was an .(extremist (۳

Thirdly, al-Kulayni states that al-Qa’im's mother was a slave-girl from al-Nawba, the northern province of Sudan(۴). Moreover al-Nu'mani and al-Saduq related other narrations which indicate that al-Qa’im's mother was to be a black slave-girl(۵). It may be that the later Imamites ignored these transmissions and considered the narration of al-Shaybani as authentic

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.Kama’l, ۳۱۷-۲۳ -۱

.Tabari, III, ۱۴۳۴ -۲

.Ikhtiyar, ۱۴۷-۸; al-Najashi, ۲۹۸; Ibn Dawud, al-Rijal, ۵۴۱ -۳
.al-Kafi, I, ۳۲۳ -۴
.N. al-Ghayba, ۸۴, ۸۵, ۱۲۰; Kama'l, ۳۲۹ -۵

.because the latter makes al-Qa'im's mother of noble ancestry and high social status

They would have been particulary attracted by the connection the report establishes between the Twelfth Imam, al-Qa'im, and Jesus, since prophetic traditions state that .(the two of them will rise together to rid the world of tyranny(۱

In the light of these three points the narration of-Muhammad b. Bahr al-Shaybani can be rejected despite the fact that al-Tusi and Ibn Rustam al-Tabari consider it reliable(۲). Possibly the correct account of the origin of al-Qa'im's mother is given by al-Mufid, who states that she was a slave-girl brought up in the house of Hakima, the sister of the tenth Imam. According to his report the Imam saw her one day and .(predicted that she would give birth to someone with special Divine blessing(۳

According to al-Saduq she died before the death of her husband, al-Hasari al-'Askari, in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴.(۴) But al-Najashi's report indicates that she was alive after this year hiding at the house of Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Hamza, one of the close associates of her .(husband al-'Askari(۵

B) The Birth of the Twelfth Imam

Since the eleventh Imam died without leaving an obvious son, most of his followers, who held that he had in fact left a successor, based their belief on traditions attributed to the preceding Imams concerning al-Qa'im al-Mahdi and his occultation(۶). The following statements, some of which we have already had occasion to relate, are examples of these traditions: The world cannot be void of a Proof, either manifest and

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.Kama'l, ۲۸۰, ۳۴۵; al-Marwazi, Kitab al-Fitan, Mss fol, ۱۵۰-۶۳ -۱
.T. al-Ghayba, ۱۳۴-۹; Dala'il, ۲۶۲-۴ -۲
.al-Irshad, ۳۹۰-۱ -۳

.Kama'l, ۴۳۱ -۴

.al-Najashi, ۲۶۸ -۵

.Ibn Qubba, Naqd Kitab al-Ashhad, quoted in Kama'l, ۱۱۳ -۶

.(well-known, or hidden because of fear(۱

The Imamate cannot be vested to two brothers after al-Hasan and al-Husayn(۲). According to al-Sadiq, the "Master of the Command" (Sahib al-Amr) will have two occultations. One of them will be so prolonged that some will say that he has died and others will say that he has been killed, and finally only a few of his followers will .remain faithful to his Imamate

No one will become cognizant of his whereabouts and his affairs except his intimate partisans, who will look after his affairs(۳). It is worth mentioning that this last tradition had also been recorded before the death of al-'Askari in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴ by the Sevener Imamites, the Waqifa who had applied these traditions to the seventh Imam .(Musa al-Kazim(۴

Abu Sahl al-Nawbakhti reports that al-'Askari had intimate partisans who used to narrate traditions concerning Islamic law on his authority and were his deputies. When al-'Askari died in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴ all of them agreed that he had left a son who was the Imam. Al-Nawbakhti adds that they forbade their adherents to ask about his name or .(to reveal his existence to his foes, who were at that time trying to arrest him(۵

The 'Abbasids'political pressure, which forced al-'Askari to hide the birth of his son from the ordinary Imamites, may also have led the Twelfth Imam to transmit different reports concerning the date of his birth, some of which took on a .hagiographical form

,Most of the Imamite sources agree that al-'Askari's son was born on Friday

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.al-Kafi I, ۱۷۸; N. Firaq, ۹۱ -۱

۲- al-Kafi, I, ۲۸۵-۶; Abu Sahl al-Nawbakhti states in his work al-Tanbih that the main argument used by the Imamites to prove the existence of the Twelfth Imam was the traditions of the preceding Imams, which had been narrated beforethe death of the eleventh Imam in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴; quoted in Kama'l, ۹۲-۳; also see N. Firaq, ۹۰-۹۱; Q. Maqalat, ۱۰۲.

۳- N. al-Ghayba, ۹۰.

۴- T. al-Ghayba, ۹۰.

۵- Abu Sahl al-Nawbakhti, al-Tanbih, quoted in Kama'l, ۹۲-۳.

the ۱۵th of Sha'ban(۱), but they differ about the year of his birth. Al-Qummi gives an account of a group of Imamites who held that al- 'Askari had died and left a son called Muhammad, who had already come of age when his father died(۲).

But they did not fix the year of his birth. Perhaps this group based their belief in the existence of al-'Askarl's son mainly upon the tradition which says that the earth cannot be void of a Proof. Unfortunately al-Qummi does not report any witnesses to the birth of the Imam from this group to support their opinion.

Al-Kulayni, al-Mufid and al-Tusi mention four different viewpoints concerning the date of the Twelfth Imam's birth. The first was related by 'Allan al-Razi and al-Kulayni on the authority of 'Ali b. Muhammad, who states that the Twelfth Imam was born in ۲۵۵/۸۶۸.(۳) Al-Tusi reports two narrations attributed to Hakima bint al-Jawad which support this date(۴).

The second report states that he was born in ۲۵۸/۸۷۱. This report is attributed by Daw' b. 'Ali al-'Ijli to an anonymous Persian who related that in the year ۲۶۰/۸۷۳ he had come to Samarra from Persia to serve in the house of al- 'Askari. According to the Persian one of al'Askari's slave-girls had given birth and he saw the child in the arms of another slave-girl. He estimated his age at about two years(۵).

Another transmission, on the authority of Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Bilal, relates that al-'Askari informed him twice about his successor:

For example, see al-Kafi, I, ۵۱۴; Kama'l, ۴۲۴; al-Irshad, ۳۹۰. However, Ibn Rustam al- -۱ Tabari mentions that al-'Askari's son was born on the ۸th of Sha'ban, ۲۵۷/۸۷۰; Dalail, .۲۷۲

Q. Maqalat, ۱۱۴; al-Saduq reports a narration the authority of Ya'qub b. Manfush -۲ who claimed that al-'Askari had shown him his son, whose age at that time was .between eight and ten years old; Kama'l, ۴۰۷

.al-Kafi, I, ۳۲۹; al-Irshad, ۳۹۰-۳۹۱ -۳

.T. al-Ghayba, ۱۵۰-۱۵۱, ۱۵۳ -۴

.al-Kafi, I, ۵۱۴-۵ -۵

(once in ۲۵۸/۸۷۱, then three days before his death in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴.(۱

The narration attributed to Daw' does not mention explicitly the date of the Imam's birth nor the time when the narrator gave his estimation, whether it was before or after the death of al-'Askari. Regarding the narration of Ibn Bilal, although al-'Askari informed him about the existence of his successor in ۲۵۸/۸۷۱, this does not indicate or reveal that the birth of his son occurred in that year. In fact it leads us to think that the .birth occurred before ۲۵۸/۸۷۱

The third viewpoint was that of a group of Imamites who thought that al- 'Askari's son had been born after his father's death in ۱۲۶۱/۸۷۴. They claimed that a slave-girl had conceived a child belonging to al-'Askari, and that her pregnancy had been known to .the caliph as well as to other people

Thus the authorities delayed the division of his share of the estate until the pregnancy was proved invalid to the caliph. They contended that the Imam was born eight months after his father's death, and was then hidden. Al- 'Askari had commanded .(that he be named Muhammad(۲

From the historical viewpoint, the account given by this group is completely unconvincing and in itself does not encourage one to believe that al'Askari had left a successor. Firstly, al-'Askari's slave-girl, Saqil, who had claimed that she was pregnant by her master, was detained by the 'Abbasid authorities for two years until

,the pregnancy was proved invalid(٣). Secondly

p: ١٠٨

.al-Kafi, I, ٣٢٨; al-Irshad, ٣٩۴ -١

.Q. Maqalat, ١١۴; N. Firaq, ٨۵ -٢

.Kama'l, ٣٣ -٣

al-Kulayni reports that Abu Hashim al-Ja'fari(١) once asked the eleventh Imam

O master, do you have a son?" He replied, "Yes." Abu Hashim said, "If something" should happen to you, where should I ask for him?" The Imam said, "In Medina."(٢)

It is well-known that al -'Askari died in ٢۶٠/٨٧۴ and that Abu Hashim died the following year. Therefore this narration would suggest that the birth occurred before ٢۶٠/٨٧۴. Thirdly, al-Mas'udi reports that the Twelfth Imam was born two years after the death of his grandfather, al-Hadi(٣). As the latter died in ٢۵۴/٨۶٩,(۴) the birth would have .occurred in ٢۵۶/٨٧٠

Al-Mas'udi's narration adds weight to the fourth viewpoint, which places the birth of the Twelfth Imam in ٢۵۶/٨٧٠. The Imamite sources record many narrations in favour of this date(۵). The most important one, however, is mentioned on the authority of Mu'alla b. Muhammad and Ahmad b. Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah, who related that al-'Askari issued a letter to his reliable followers after the assassination of al-Muhtadi, ,the caliph, saying

This is the punishment of him who has sinned against Allah, the Exalted, in regard to" his legatees. He thought that he would kill me without offspring. Now he has seen the ".omnipotence of Allah, the Exalted

The narration continues to report that in fact the Imam had a son called Muhammad, who was born in ٢۵۶/٨٧٠.(۶)

Al-Muhtadi wad dethroned and died in Rajab ٢۵۶/٨٧٠.(٧)

Moreover all the Imamite narrators agree that the birth of the Twelfth Imam occurred on the ١٥th of Sha' ban. So if

p: ١٠٩

١- According to al-Tabari, Abu Hashim al-Ja'fari died in ٢٦١/٨٧٥; Tabari, III, ١٨٨٧.

٢- al-Kafi, I, ٣٢٨.

٣- Ithbat, ٢٥١.

٤- According to al-Kulayni the Tenth Imam, al-Hadi, died on ٢٦ Jumada II, ٢٥٤/٢ June ٨٦٩; al-Kafi, I, ٤٩٧.

٥- Kama'l, ٤٣٢.

٦- al-Kafi I, ٣٢٩, ٥١٤; Kama'l, ٤٣٠; T. al-Ghayba, ١٤٤.

٧- Tabari, III, ١٨١٣; al-Kama'l, VII, ١٥٧.

one links the death of alMuhtadi in the month of Rajab with the letter of al-'Askari which was issued in the next month, Sha' ban, it would seem plausible that the Imam's birth occurred on the ١٥th of Sha'ban in ٢٥٦/٨٧٠.

Furthermore al-Mas'udi reports an anecdote attributed to Khadija bint Muhammad al-Jawad to support such a hypothesis. In ٢٦٢/٨٧٥ a certain man called Ahmad b. Ibrahim asked her about al- 'Askari's successor, and she confirmed his existence, adding that he had taken over the Imamate on ١١th Rabi' ١٢٦٠/٨٧٤ at the age of four years and seven months(١), which means that he was born on ١٥th Sha'ban ٢٥٦/١٨th July ٨٧٠.

It is worth quoting here a narration concerning the birth of the Twelfth Imam which was viewed as authentic by the time of al-Mas'udi, who died in ٣٤٥/٩٥٦. Al-Saduq presented it as follows and attributed it to Hakima bint al-Jawad, who related,

"Abu Muhammad al-Hasan b. 'Ali, peace be upon both of them, called on me with the message, 'O aunt, break your fast at our house tonight, because it is the fifteenth of Sha'ban. Tonight Allah, the Exalted, will manifest the Hujja, His Proof on earth.' (When I went to the house), I asked him who the mother of the child was. He said, 'Narjis.'

I said, 'May Allah make me your sacrifice! But there is no sign of pregnancy in her!' He said, 'What I am telling you is so.' Therefore I went in and greeted them. When I had

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.Ithbat, ۲۶۱-۲ -۱

taken my seat Narjis came forward to take off my shoes and said to me, 'My mistress and the lady of my family, how are you tonight?'

I said, 'Nay you are the mistress of myself and my family.' But she denied my speech and replied, 'What are you saying, O aunt?' I said to her, 'O my daughter, tonight Allah the Exalted will give you a son who shall be the Master in this world and in the hereafter' She became embarrassed and blushed.

"After I had finished my evening prayer I broke my fast and then went to sleep. At midnight I woke for prayer. I performed my prayer while Narjis was sleeping, without any sign of childbirth. Then I sat down performing the supererogatory prayer. Thereafter I went to bed and got up again, but she was still sleeping. Then she got up, performed her supererogatory prayer and lay down again."

Hakima continued, "I went out to see the dawn and found that its first stage was about to appear. But she was still asleep. So I began to doubt al- 'Askari's expectation. Just then he called out from his place, 'Do not be in a hurry, O aunt, the matter is approaching.' I sat down and recited the Qur anic suras Ha Mim al-Sajda (۴۰) and Yasin (۳۶). At that moment she got up alarmed. I ran to her and said, 'The name of Allah be upon you, do you feel anything?'

She replied, 'O aunt, yes.'

Then I said to her 'Gather yourself and procure peace in your heart.' However at that moment we felt sleepy and drowsiness overcame us. After that I got up at the voice of my Master, and when I raised the covering from him I saw him, peace be upon him,

prostrate on the ground(۱). I took him to my bosom and noticed that he was pure and .clean

Abu Muhammad called out to me and said, 'O aunt, bring my son to me,' and I did so ... Afterwards al-'Askari put his tongue in his mouth and gently stroked his eyes, ears and joints with his hand. Then he said, 'O my son, speak.' The child replied, 'I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, He is unique and has no partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah.' Then he sent his greetings upon the commander of the faithful (Amir al-Mu'minin), and upon the Imams respectively until .he stopped at the name of his father. Then he stopped speaking

Abu Muhammad said, 'O aunt, take him to his mother, so that he may greet her, and" then bring him back to me.' I took him to her and when he had done so I brought him back and left him there. Al-Askari said to me, 'O aunt, come to visit us on the seventh day.' The next day I came to greet Abu Muhammad and raised the curtain to see my Master. But I did

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According to al-Kulayni each Imam when he comes out from the womb of is mother -۱ puts his hands on the ground and holds his head towards the sky, and then recites .some Qur'anic verses; al-Kafi, I, ۳۸۶

not see him. So I asked the Imam, 'May Allah make me your sacrifice! What has happened to my Master?' He replied, 'O aunt, we have entrusted him to the one to (whom the mother of Moses entrusted her son.'(۱

Hakima said, "On the seventh day I came and greeted him and took my seat. Abu Muhammad said, 'Bring my son to me.' I brought him wrapped in a piece of cloth, and the Imam repeated what he had done on the first day and the child said what he had "said before. Then he recited the Qur'anic verse

And We desired to show favour unto those who were oppressed in the earth, and to make them Imams and to make them the inheritors. And to establish them in the

earth, and to show Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts that which they feared from (them. "(۲)

The hagiographical nature of this account is obvious. However, certain of its elements suggest something about the nature of the birth. It seems that the pregnancy of Narjis was deliberately concealed, and a close relative was brought in to act as midwife only when the birth was due. If this was the case and a son was indeed born to al- 'Askari - the likeliest date being ۲۵۶/۸۷۰ - then the reasons for the concealment of the pregnancy and the birth would be the same as the reasons for the Imam's .occultation

The Reasons for the First Occultation of the Twelfth Imam .۳

The early Imamite works mention three reasons for the occultation of the Twelfth ,Imam

p: ۱۱۳

Kama'l, ۴۲۴-۶; the account of the birth of the Twelfth Imam has been related in the -۱ Imamites' works with some differences in detail. See Ithbat, ۲۴۸-۵۰; T. al Ghayba, ۱۵۰-۴; Dalail, ۲۶۹-۷۰. All the Imamite sources agree that al-'Askari left only one son; al-Saduq, however, reports a narration on the authority of Ibrahim al-Mazyar which indicates that al-Askari had two sons, Muhammad and Musa, who were living in Hijaz. A critical study of the context of the narration and its chain of transmitters suggests it was invented, mainly because the narrator Ibrahim b. al-Mazyar died before ۲۶۰/۸۷۴, whereas according to the narrative al-'Askari's sons were mature, and this is unlikely .if the Twelfth Imam was born in ۲۵۶/۸۷۴; Kama'l, ۴۴۵-۵۳

.al-Qasas, ۲۸: ۵-۶ -۲

reasons which mirror the new tactics of the Imams in their religious and political activities

Al-Sadiq was reported to have said that al-Qa'im would go into occultation before he rose again, because he would be afraid of being killed(۱). A second reason is

mentioned on the authority of the Twelfth Imam, who was reported as having informed his partisan Ishaq b. Ya'qub that all his forefathers had paid the oath of obedience to oppressive rulers, but that he had hidden himself in order to rise in arms, and had made no oath of obedience to any oppressive ruler(۲).

This reason had already been mentioned by al-Hasan and al-Rid'a, who both said that al-Qa'im alone would not swear fealty to an oppressive ruler(۳). The third reason is mentioned by al-Kulayni, who states that the occultation was a test set by Allah for his creatures, so as to see who would remain steadfast in acknowledging the Imamate of the Twelfth Imam(۴).

These three reasons depict a new phase in the attitude of the Imamites toward their struggle for power. It appears that the quiescent policy of the Imams towards the ‘Abbasid regime, along with their continued intellectual activities, had led the Imamite organizaton to a more politically developed situation.

This fact encouraged the Twelfth Imam to instigate underground political activities against the ‘Abbasids. At the same time, he knew that certain followers of his forefathers had caused the failure of two bids for power in ۷۰/۶۸۹ and ۱۴۰/۷۵۷ by revealing the activities of

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۱- ‘Ilal, ۲۴۳-۴; Kama'l, ۲۴; N. al-Ghayba, ۸۶-۷; al-Kafi, I, ۳۴۰; al-Murtada, Mas'ala wajiza fi al-Ghayba , l l; al-Fusul al-'Ashara, ۱۶.

۲- N. al-Ghayba, ۱۰۱; Kama'l, ۳۰۳, ۴۸۵.

۳- ‘Ilal, ۲۴۵; Kama'l, ۳۱۶.

۴- al-Kafi, I, ۳۳۶.

the Imams to their enemies, which led to their arrest and the failure of their attempt(۱).

Perhaps such incidents obliged the Twelfth Imam to live in a state of concealment even from his own followers so as to practice his underground activities through the

Imamite organization and to evade any 'Abbasid bid to arrest him. This is indicated by many traditions commanding the Imamites to keep the name of al-Qa'im a secret(۲).

Al-Kulayni reports that, after the death of al- 'Askari in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴, some people among his adherents asked the agent (wakil), Abu Abd Allah al-Salihi, to ask about the name and residence of the Twelfth Imam for them. When he did so, the answer was,

"If you reveal the name to them, they will reveal it in public; and if they realize the place of his residence they will lead foes to it."(۳)

Al-Kulayni mentions another report which asserts that the occultation of the Twelfth Imam was a preparatory step for the overthrow of the state of injustice(۴).

It is relevant to study the plan of al-'Askari to hide his son and the 'Abbasid attitude towards the Imamites after the death of al-'Askari so as to see why the later felt it necessary to hide his son.

۴. Al- 'Askari's Plan to Hide his Successor

The circumstances which accompanied the birth of al-'Askari's son suggest that al-'Askari wanted to save his successor from the restrictive policy of the 'Abbasids, which had been established by al-Ma'mun. Hence he did not circulate in public the news concerning the birth of his son,

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۱- al-Kafi, I, ۳۶۹.

۲- al-Kafi, I, ۳۲۸, ۳۳۰.

۳- al-Kafi, I, ۳۳۳.

۴- al-Kafi, I, VIII, ۲۴۷.

but only disclosed it to a few reliable followers, such as Abu Hashim al-Ja'fari, Ahmad b. Ishaq, and Hakima and Khadija, the aunts of al-'Askari(۱).

Moreover he decided to move his son to a place safer than Samarra so that he could

carry on his religious and political activities through the Wikala without suffering the .interference of the ‘Abbasids

Study of the hagiographical and historical anecdotes concerning the first occultation of the Imam and his reappearance reveals that al‘Askari hid his son first in Samarra and then in Medina, where he lived under the guardianship of his paternal grandmother. According to al-Saduq, al-’Askari sent his son to an unknown place forty .(days after his birth, and then his son was brought back to his mother(۲

According to al-Mas’udi, three years later, in the year ۲۵۹/۸۷۳, al‘Askari asked his own mother, Hadith to go on the pilgrimage. He explained his critical position to her, gave her full instructions, and sent his son with her. His son had already received from his father the signs of the Imamate, the most esteemed name of Allah, the inheritance .and the weapon

Thereafter Hadith and her grandson went to Mecca under the protection of a close friend called Ahmad b. Muhammad b. al-Muttahir(۳). It appears that after they had performed the rite of pilgrimage they went to Medina, which was used as the place of .concealment for the Twelfth Imam

Many reports incline one to accept the above description of the Twelfth Imam's early life. As we

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۱ - The Imamite works record the names of many individuals who saw the son of al-’Askari. One report attributed to Muhammad b. ‘Uthman, the second Saf’ir of the Twelfth Imam, says that al-Askari gathered together forty of his reliable followers and showed them his son; Kama’l, ۴۳۵; al-Kafi, I, ۳۳۰-۱; T. al-Ghayba, ۱۴۸, ۱۵۲

۲ - Kama’l, ۴۲۹.

۳ - Ithbat, ۲۴۷-۸, ۲۵۳.

have seen, Abu Hashim al-Ja’fari once asked al-’Askari where he should ask for his successor were he to die. Al-’Askari said, "In Medina." Another report states that the

.(residence of al-Qa'im would be in Medina, surrounded by thirty intimate followers(1)

All the traditions concerning the rise of al-Qa'im indicate that it will occur in Mecca(2). The Imamite sources record that the Twelfth Imam al-Qa'im went on the pilgrimage every year(3). Such evidence indicates that the Twelfth Imam was in an area not far .from Mecca, perhaps Medina

As part of al-'Askari's prudent fear, he made his manifest testament only to his mother, Hadith, and did not mention any successor openly to anyone else(4). From all this it seems most probable that the Twelfth Imam spent most of his early life in Medina, because al-'AskarT recognised the danger which his son would face were he .to remain in Iraq

The Abbasid Attempt to Arrest al- 'Askari's Son .5

The caliph al-Mu'tamid continued the ‘Abbasid policy of patting the Imams under close watch and enforced it even more vigorously with the spread of the traditions .concerning the role of the Twelfth Imam

On hearing about the deterioraton of al-'Askari's health, al-Mu'tamid sent five of his most trusted officers, amongst whom was his servant Nahrir, to the house of al-'Askari to watch over him. He also ordered the chief judge, al-Hasan b. Abi al-.Shawarib(5), to send ten reliable people to participate in this task

When al-'Askari died on 8th Rabi' I 260/1st January 874, the caliph sent a contingent to search his

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1- al-Kafi I, 328, 240; N. al-Ghayba, 99-100; T. al-Ghayba, 149.

2- Abd al-Razzaq al-San'ani, al-Musannaf (Beirut, 1972), XI, 371; N. al-Ghayba, 98-9'.

3- al-Kafi, I, 339.

4- al-Fusul al-'Ashara, 13.

5 - ... Al-Hasan b. Muhammad was related to an Umayyad family called Al Abi al-Shawarib. During the ‘Abbasid period most of his relatives worked in the office of

Judge (al-Qada'). As part of his anti-shi’ite policy al-Mutawakkil included al-Hasan b. Abi al-Shawarib among his courtiers (Tabari, III, ۱۴۲۸). Later al-Mu’tazz appointed him chief judge in ۲۵۲/۸۶۶ (Tabari, III, ۱۶۸۴). Three years later he was discharged from his office, but recovered it during al-Mu’tadid's regime. He continued in this office until his death in Mecca in ۲۶۱/۸۷۵; Tabari, III, ۱۷۸۷, ۱۷۹۰-۱, ۱۸۹۱, ۱۹۰۷.

house. They sealed off all his estate and then looked for his son to the extent that they even brought women to examine his slavegirls in case any of them were pregnant(۱).

Despite the fact that the primary investigation proved to al-Mu’tamid that al-’Askari died without leaving a son, the vast majority of the Imamites held that he had in fact left one(۲).

According to the Imamite works, Ja’far, the brother of al-’Askari, who had already claimed to be the Imam and tried to succeed his brother, revealed to the authorities the Imamites' belief in the existence of al-’Askari's successor. Al-Saduq reports that a band of people from Qumm, among whom was Muhammad b. Ja’far al-Himyari, arrived at Samarra in ignorance of the death of al-’Askari with letters of inquiry and legal taxes.

There they learned about his death and were directed to Ja’far. They met him and wanted to indulge in the ceremonies which they had practiced before on such occasions.

They asked Ja’far to tell them about the amount of money they had brought and who had given it to them. Ja’far replied that he was no soothsayer and that the things the Imamites claimed about al‘Askari were mere lies, because Allah alone could know such things. He then told them. to hand the money over to him, but they refused to do so, and their quarrel became public.

While they were arguing someone came, called them by name and led them to a house. There he showed

.al-Kafi, I, ۵۰۵; Kama'l, ۴۳ -۱
.Kama'l, ۴۳ -۲

them someone who was believed to be the agent of the Twelfth Imam and who revealed to them how much money they had brought. Therefore they accepted the Imamate of the Twelfth Imam. Having done so they were commanded that they .(should henceforth hand the money to a certain man in Baghdad(۱

According to al-Saduq, Ja'far went straight to the caliph, al-Mu'tamid, and informed him that the Imamites still believed in the existence of a son of al'Askari. Al-Mu'tamid immediately had this investigated by sending a band of soldiers with Ja'far to search .(the house of al-'Askari and the houses of the neighbours(۲

They arrested a slave-girl called Saqil and demanded that she show them the child, but she denied having given birth to a child. According to al-Saduq, in order to save the life of the Twelfth Imam, Saqil claimed to be pregnant (۳). Thereupon al-Mu'tamid .incarcerated her in his harem for observation

Under the supervision of Nahrir, the caliph's wives and slave-girls and the wives of the chief judge, Ibn Abi al-Shawarib, observed Saqil for two years until they felt that further observation was no longer necessary. When disturbances occurred in various parts of the Empire and the vizier 'Ubayd Allah Ibn Khaqan suddenly died, they .(ignored her completely(۴

Many reports indicate that while Saqil was imprisoned the 'Abbasids carried out a campaign of persecution against the Imamites and that Ja'far was behind it. In spite of the fact that the Imamites lost many people, all attempts on the

.Kama'l, ۴۷۶- ۴۷۸ -۱
.Kama'l, ۴۷۳ -۲

.Kama'l, ۴۷۶ -۳

.Kama'l, ۴۷۴ -۴

.part of the authorities to arrest the Twelfth Imam proved fruitless

According to al-Mufid, al-'Askari wanted to deny the 'Abbasids the opportunity to find any trace which might endanger the life of his successor. Hence he devised a plan whereby according to his public will he left his estate only to his mother, Hadith(۱).

On hearing of the death of her son, she came from Medina to Samarra to take over the estate, but found that it was under 'Abbasid control. Furthermore, Ja'far quarrelled with her about his brother's inheritance, insisting on his right to the estate. He raised the case with the authorities, who were trying to confirm that al-'Askari had .no son by interfering in it

Hadith maintained that al-'Askari had made her his sole heiress, and that according to Imamite law Ja'far had no right to the estate of his brother(۲).

This quarrel went on for two years until the pregnancy of Saqil proved false. Although the judge adjudicated in favour of Hadith, Ja'far's claim was not disputed because of his influential connections. In the end the estate was divided into two parts, in spite of Imamite law(۳).

The Underground Activities of the Twelth Imam as seen in the Actions of the Saf'irs

A Brief Study of the Wikala Before the Twelfth Imam .۱

As mentioned in Chapter Two, a critical situation the Imams faced, brought about by the 'Abbasids, forced the Imams to search for a new means to communicate with the members of their congregation. The Imamite sources indicate that the sixth Imam al-Sadiq was the first Imam to employ an underground system of communication (al-Tanzim al-Sirri) among his community(۴).

.al-Fusul al-'Ashara, ۱۳ -۱

According to Imamite law, if a dead person leaves a mother and a son and a - ٢ brother, the brother has no right to take anything from the estate; al-Saduq, al-muqnia (Tehran, ١٣٧٧), ١٧١; Kama'l, ۴٧, ۵٨.

Muhammad al-Sadr, op. cit., I, ٣١۴ -٣.

Javad 'Ali, op. cit., in Der Islam, XXV (١٩٣٩), ٢١٢ -۴.

The main purpose of the Wikala was to collect the khums, the zakat, and other kinds of alms for the Imam from his followers. Although the Wikala may have had other purposes at that time, the sources rarely record them. Al-Sadiq directed the activities of the organization with such care that the 'Abbasids were not aware of its existence.

As part of his prudent fear (al-Taqiyya), he used to ask some of his followers to carry out certain tasks for the organization without informing them that they were in fact his agents. Al-Tusi reports that Nasr b. Qabus al-Lakhmi spent twenty years working as an agent (wakil) for al-Sadiq, without knowing that he had actually been appointed as one.

Al-Sadiq's most important agent in Iraq was 'Abd al-Rahman b. al-Hajjaj, who continued in this office until his death, after the time of the eighth Imam al-Rid'a(١).

Mu'alla b. Khunays was al-Sadiq's agent in Medina. In ١٣٣/٧۵٠ he was arrested by the 'Abbasids and sentenced to death because he refused to reveal the names of the Imamite propagandists(٢).

Despite the difficulties which faced the Wikala in its early stages, the areas covered by the agents and their training were extended during the time of al-Kazim as activities were intensified. The rite of pilgrimage was used as a means to communicate with each other. Al-Kazim's agent in Egypt was 'Uthman b. 'Isa al-Rawwasi(٣).

He also had agents in numerous other places, such as Hayyan al-Sarraj in Kufa, Muhammad b. Abi 'Umayr in Baghdad,

1- al‑Ghayba, ۲۲۴‑۵. Al‑Tusi thinks that Ibn al‑Hajjaj died during the time of al‑Rid'a, but al‑Mas'udi reports that he was still alive after al‑Rid'a's death in ۲۰۳/۸۱۸; Ithbat, ۲۱۳.

2- al-Kafi, II, ۵۵۷; Ikhtiyar, ۳۸۱; al‑Saduq, Man la Yahduruh al‑Faqih (al‑Mashyakha), IV, ۶۷. The date of his death is not mentioned. However, al Kashshi reports that Dawud b. 'Ali, who killed Mu'alla, died a few days after Mu'alla, and according to al‑Dhahabi, Dawud died in ۱۳۳/۷۵۰ (Mizan, II, ۱۴). So the persecution of Mu'alla must have occured in the same year.

3- Ikhtiyar, ۴۵۹‑۶۰.

and Yunis b. Ya'qub al‑Bajli in Medina(1). Al‑Mas'udi's report suggests that all the agents received their instructions from 'Abd al‑Rahman b. al‑Hajjaj, who was then resident in Baghdad(2).

The agents faced another campaign of arrests in ۱۷۹/۷۹۵ instigated by the caliph al‑Rashid. It caused the Imamite organization considerable damage. The agent in Baghdad, Muhammad b. Abi 'Umayr, was arrested and tortured in the unfulfilled hope that he would reveal the names and locations of al‑Kazim's followers, while his sister was put in jail for four years(3).

Another agent, 'Ali b. Yaqtin, who used to send money and letters to the Imam through an individual called Isma'il b. Salam, was also arrested and spent the rest of his life in prison(4). According to the Imamite sources the campaign of arrests led to the arrest of al‑Kazim himself and to his death in prison(5). Sixty other 'Alids also died under torture in prison(6).

After the death of al‑Kazim the members of the Imamite organization found themselves faced with an internal theological and political question involving the doctrine of al-Qa'im al‑Mahdi and his occultation. Al‑Kazim's agents, such as al‑Rawwasi in Egypt, Ziyad al‑Qindi in Baghdad, 'Ali b. Abi Hamza and Hayyan al‑Sarraj in Kufa, and al‑Hasan b. Qayama in Wasit, had received many traditions attributed to al‑Sadiq concerning al-Qa'im al‑Mahdi and his occultation, but these traditions did not explicitly state his identity(7).

Perhaps for this reason, they applied these traditions to the seventh Imam al_Kazim by denying his death and contending that he was

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۱- al_Najashi, ۲۱, ۲۳۱, ۲۵۰, ۳۴۸.

۲- Ithbat, ۲۱۳.

۳- al_Najashi, ۲۵۰.

۴- al_Najashi, ۲۰۹.

۵- Ikhtiyar, ۲۵۸; N. Firaq, ۶۷_۸, 'Uyun, ۱۹۴_۵.

۶- 'Uyun, I, ۸۹_۹۰, II, ۱۴۳.

۷- For a full account of these traditions see Chapter I pp ۱۷_۳۰; however the Waqifa report a tradition attributed to al_Sadiq which states that al-Qa'im would be the seventh Imam; Ikhtiyar, ۴۷۵; al-Kafi, I, ۳۲۰_۱

al-Qa'im al_Mahdi, but that he had gone into occultation(۱).

Consequently, they rejected the Imamate of his son al_Rid'a and split into a new group called the Waqifa, using the money of the organization to their own ends. As a result al_Rid'a lost a considerable number of trained agents and over ۱۰۰,۰۰۰ dinars(۲).

Between the years ۱۸۳_۲۰۲/۷۹۹_۸۱۷ al_Rid'a managed to solve this problem at least partially by clarifying to the members of the Waqifa the true nature of al-Qa'im al_Mahdi, as transmitted on the authority of the previous Imams. According to al_Kashshi, he seems to have been able to persuade some of the members of the Waqifa, like al_Rawwasi and his followers to recognize his Imamate(۳).

Meanwhile the role of the Wikala was expanded to embrace the new needs and tasks of the congregation. Al_Rid'a's agents were 'Abd al_'Aziz b. al_Muhtadi in Qumm(۴), Safwan b. Yahya in Kufa (۵), 'Abd Allah b. Jandab and 'Abd al_Rahman b. al_Hajjaj in Baghdad(۶).

Along with another eighty agents 'Abd al_Rahman b. al_Hajjaj controlled the leadership of the organization through the time of the ninth Imam, al_Jawad(۷), who

achieved considerable success in protecting the organization from new schisms. Moreover the tactics of his agents developed in new directions especially in widening the sphere of al‌_Taqiyya (prudent fear) by allowing some of his partisans to participate in the administration and the army of the ‘Abbasids.(۸)

During the long Imamate of the tenth Imam, al‌_Hadi (۲۲۰-۲۵۴/۸۳۵_۸۶۸) new trends emerged amongst the Imamites due to historical circumstances, trends

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۱- Ikhtiyar, ۴۶۳_۷, ۴۷۵_۸; T. al-Ghayba, ۲۲۷_۸.

۲- Ilal, I, ۲۳۵; T. al-Ghayba, ۴۶_۷; Ikhtiyar, ۴۵۹_۶۰, ۴۶۶_۷‘.

۳- Ikhtiyar, ۵۹۷_۹.

۴- Ikhtiyar, ۴۸۳, ۵۰۶, ۵۹۱_۲.

۵- al_Najashi, ۱۴۸.

۶- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۲۴_۵; al_Tusi states that ‘Abd Allah b. Jandab was the agent of the seventh and the eighth Imams but it seems that his career in the organization was earlier than that. According to Ibn Shu’ba, he was the agent of the sixth Imam, al_Sadiq; Ibn Shu’ba, Tuhaf al_‘Uqul, ۲۲۳.

۷- Ithbat, ۲۱۳_۵.

۸- al_Najashi', ۸۰, ۹۸, ۲۵۴; al_Tusi, al_Istibsar, II, ۵۸_۶۱; al_Kafi V, ۱۱۱.

which were later to play a dangerous role during the time of the Twelfth Imam.

As was pointed out above (Ch. II), al_Mutawakkil practiced the policy of al_Ma’mun, who had made al-Rid’a and his son al_Jawad join his courtiers so that their links with their partisans could be restricted and closely watched. Al_Mutawakkil did the same with al_Hadi. In ۲۳۳/۸۴۷ he summoned him , from Medina to Samarra, where he spent the rest of his life(۱).

The absence of direct contact between the Imam and his followers led to an increase in the religious and political role of the Wikala, so that the agents of the Imam gained more authority in running its affairs. Gradually the leadership of the Wikala became the only authority which could determine and prove the legitimacy of the new Imam.

For example the ninth Imam, al_Jawad, gave his testament concerning his successor to his chief agent Muhammad b. al_Faraj. He told him that in case he should die, he should take his orders from al_Hadi(۲).

When al_Jawdd died in ۲۲۰/۸۳۵ the prominent leaders of the organization held a secret meeting at the house of Muhammad b. al_Faraj to determine the next Imam, who was proved to be al_Hadi(۳).

The agents of the Imam gradually gained a great deal of experience in organizing their partisans into separate units. Several reports suggest that the agents divided their followers into four separate groups according to area. The first included Baghdad, Mada'in, Sawad and Kufa, the second Basra and al_Ahwaz,

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۱- al_ Ya'qubi, III, ۲۱۷.
۲- Ibn Shahr Ashub, Manaqib, IV, ۳۸۹.
۳- al_Kafi, I, ۳۲۴.

the third Qumm and Hamadan, and the fourth the Hijaz, Yemen and Egypt.

Each area was entrusted to an independent agent, beneath whom many local agents were appointed. The workings of this system can be observed in letters of instruction attributed to al_Hadi concerning the organization's administration. It is reported that he sent a letter in ۲۳۲/۸۴۷ to his local agent, 'Ali b. Bilal, saying:

"I have substituted Abu 'Ali b. Rashid for 'Ali b. al_Husayn b. 'Abd Rabba. I have entrusted him with this post since he is sufficiently qualified so that no one can take precedence over him. He has been informed that you are the chief (shaykh) of your own area, since I wished to invest you with that area. However, you have to follow him and hand all the revenues to collect over to him."

In a letter to his agents in Baghdad, Mada'in and Kufa, al_Hadi wrote,

"O Ayyub b. Nuh, I am commanding you to cut off relations between yourself and Abu

‘Ali. Both of you should engage yourselves with what you have been entrusted and ordered to do in your areas. If you do so you should be able to manage your affairs without consulting me ... O Ayyub, I am ordering you neither to receive anything from the people of Baghdad and Mada’in, nor to give anyone amongst them permission to contact me.

If anyone brings you revenue from outside your area, order him to send it to the agent of his own area. O

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Abu 'Ali, I am ordering you to follow what I have ordered Ayyub."(۱)

This system saved the organization from otherwise inevitable damage after the harsh attack of al‑Mutawakkil upon its underground political cells in ۲۳۵/۸۵۰. In the same way it was saved from the attack of al‑Musta’in in ۲۴۸/۸۶۲.

It should be noted that during the time of the tenth and eleventh Imams, the leadership of the organization in the four areas, was monopolized by a few individuals. Their tasks later fell to their descendants and remained under their control during the shorter occultation of the Twelfth Imam. For example, ‘Ali b. Mazyar was the agent of al‑Jawad and al‑Hadi in al‑Ahwaz(۲), while his sons were the agents of the Twelfth Imam in the same region(۳).

Ibrahim b. Muhammad al‑Hamadani was the agent of al‑Hadi in Hamadan(۴), while his offspring inherited this post from father to son until the time of the Twelfth Imam(۵).

Another agent was Isma’il b. Ishaq b. Nawbakht(۶), whose family later directed the members of the organization in Baghdad, while one of his relatives, al‑Husayn b. Ruh, became the third Saf’ir or "representative" of the Twelfth Imam.

Among the agents, the most important was ‘Uthmari b. Said al‘Umari, who, as we shall see, was brought up under the auspices of the tenth Imam, al‑Hadi. He made him first his own agent and then the agent of his son, Imam al‑ ‘Askari. After the

death of the latter ‘Uthman controlled the whole leadership of the organization as the first representative of

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۱- Ikhtiyar, ۵۱۳-۴; according to another letter the agent of al-Hadi in Baghdad and its environs was ‘Ali b. al-Husayn b. ‘Abd Rabba. After his death in Mecca in ۲۲۹/۸۴۳, Abu ‘Ali b. Rashid assumed his post; Ikhtiyar, ۵۱۰.

۲- al-Najashi, ۱۹۱.

۳- Kama'l, ۴۴۲; al-Kafi I, ۵۱۸.

۴- Ikhtiyar, ۶۰۸, ۶۱۱-۲, ۵۵۷.

۵- Ibn Dawud, al-Rijal, ۲۴۸; al-Kafi, I, ۵۱۹; Ikhtiyar, ۶۰۸; al-Najashi, ۲۶۵-۶.

۶- - Ithbat, ۲۱۵; al-Barqi categorized him as one of the close followers of al-Hadi; al-Rijal, ۶۰

the Twelfth Imam, and his son Muhammad later succeeded him to the post, as the second Saf'ir.

The fact that the Imam's activities were underground made it easy for certain people to claim falsely to be the representatives of al-Hadi and al- ‘Askari, and thus to collect money from the Imamites. It seems that this practice was carried out by the extremists (al-Ghulat) and increased throughout the time of the Twelfth Imam at the expense of his rightful agents(۱).

۲. The Main Functions of the Wikala

For the Twelver Imamites the series of Imams ends with the Twelfth Imam, who, from the death of his father in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴ up to the year ۳۲۹/۹۴۰-۱, is believed to have lived in occultation. According to alNu'mani this period was called the "short occultation," al-Ghayba al-Qasira(۲), and according to later scholars the minor occultation, al-Ghayba al-Sughra.

It was of decisive importance for the organization and the internal evolution of the congregation. During it the Twelfth Imam is considered to have pursued his activities

from behind the scenes and to have led his followers by means of four specially ".chosen representatives. These were called sufara (sing. Saf'ir) or "ambassadors

The first was 'Uthman b. Said al-Umari, the second his son Muhammad, the third .al_Husayn b. Ruh al-Nawbakhti and the fourth 'Ali b. Muhammad al_Sammari

A critical study of the history of this period (۲۶۰_۳۲۹/۸۷۴_۹۴۱) reveals that the main function of the Saf'irs was to implement certain tasks previously undertaken by the .(Imams so as to save him from the political pressure of the 'Abbasids(۳

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The representatives of this trend throughout the time of the tenth and the eleventh -۱ Imams were mainly such extremists as Ahmad b. Muhammad al Sayyari, Ja'far b. Waqid, Abu al_Samhari, 'Amr b. Yahya al_Dihqan, Faris b. Hatim al_Qazwini and .Muhammad b. Nusayr al_Numayri; Ikhtiyar, ۵۲۵, ۵۲۹, ۵۷۳, ۶۰۶

N. al_Ghayba, ۹۲ -۲

.al_Sadr, op. cit., I, ۳۴۱_۶ -۳

His predecessors had suffered this pressure since the time of al_Ma'mun, especially since it was widely accepted among the Imamites of that period that the Twelfth Imam would be al-Qa'im bi_l_Amr li_Izalat al_Duwal, that is,"he who is to be in charge "(of eliminating the governments (of the oppressors by militant means).(۱

One of the ambassadors' tasks was to draw complete darkness over the name of the Imam and his whereabouts, not only as regards his foes, but even as regards his followers. Simultaneously the Saf'ir had to prove the existence of the Imam to his reliable adherents. This statement can be illustrates by a report of al_Kulayni. 'Abd Allah b. Ja'far al_Himyari once asked the first Saf'ir whether or not he had seen the .successor of the eleventh Imam

Al_'Umari, the Saf'ir, confirmed that he had seen him. But he added that people were forbidden to ask about his name, because if the government discovered his name they would certainly try to arrest him(۲). In this way the first Saf'ir led the court of the

caliph, al-Mu'tamid, to think that the eleventh Imam had died without a successor(3).

According to al-Kulayni's report, the conclusion reached by the 'Abbasids seems to have released the Imamites from the humiliation which they had suffered throughout the time of the previous Imams. The agents of the Twelfth Imam began to carry out their activities without being afraid of the authorities, since they were sure of the non-existence of the Twelfth Imam, and thus did

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۱- T. al-Ghayba, ۵۶, ۱۰۹.

۲- T. al-Ghayba, ۵۷.

۳- al-Kafi, I, ۵۰۵; Kama'l, ۴۴۱-۲.

not bother to investigate the Imamite's activities(1).

The activities of the Saf'irs also aimed at protecting the congregation from any more schisms by proving the authenticity of the Imamate of al-'Askari's son. Towards this aim they employed those sayings of the Prophet and the Imams which indicate that the series of Imams will end with the Twelfth, who would then go into occultation(2).

The four Saf'irs carried out another task in the name of the Imam. They received and collected the taxes that the Imamites had previously paid to their Imams. According to the Imamite sources all the Saf'irs performed miracles before receiving the money so that their adherents would believe in their legitimacy. According to the Imamite belief, whoever proclaimed himself a Saf'ir and did not work miracles had lied about the Imam and was driven out of the organization(3).

The Tawqi'at (written and signed answers or pronouncements) attributed to the Twelfth Imam indicate that he neither gave any statement to elucidate his attitude towards the political and economic situation of his time, nor ordered his followers to implicate themselves in an open political struggle with their rivals, the 'Abbasids.

In fact, it is reasonable to agree with Muhammad al-Sadr that by acting in this manner

the Imam enabled his partisans to pursue their activities without attracting the attention of the ‘Abbasids by statements criticising their rule(۴).

Moreover it seems most likely that in following this policy the Imam wanted his agents and propagandists to concentrate their efforts upon strengthening

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۱- T. al-Ghayba, ۱۵۷; al-Kafi, I, ۳۳۰.

۲- For a full account of the traditions which were used by the Imamites during the short occultation, see al_Kafi, I, ۵۲۵_۳۵; N. al_Ghayba, ۲۶_۴۷; al_‘Asfari, Asl Abu Said al_'A fari, f. ۱_۳.

۳- Kama’l, ۴۷۶_۸; Javad 'Ali, op. cit., in Der Islam, XXV (۱۹۳۹), ۱۹۷_۲۲۷.

۴- al_Sadr; op. cit., I, ۳۷۷_۹.

the size and quality of their party, until it developed its political means and ideology to a degree which might enable it to put its goal into action.

But the involvement of the agents in an immediate political struggle would have taken place at the expense of an increase in the size and the development of the ideological and political basis of the organization.

۳. The Early Career of Uthman b. Sa’id

Most of the Imamite information concerning the activities of the four 'Saf’irs is attributed to al_Tusi in his work al_Ghayba. The latter depended mainly on two early missing works, that is, Kitab fi Akhbar Abi Amr wa Abi Ja’far al_‘Umariyyayn by Ibn Barina al_Katib, the son of the granddaughter of the second Saf’ir, and Kitab Akhbar al_Wakil al_‘Arba’a by Ahmad b. Nuh(۱).

Unfortunately, the work of al_Tusi and other works give very few details concerning the background to the career of the first Saf’ir. We know that the latter was Abu ‘Amr ‘Uthman b. Said al-Umari from the tribe of Asad.

Javad ‘Ali, whose opinion was followed by Rajkowski, thought that the grandfather of

‘Uthman was ‘Amr b. Hurayth al_Sayrafi al_Kufi, a well_known Shi’ite from Kufa who belonged to Banu Asad. According to Javad ‘Ali, since both belonged to the same tribe, both are known by the epithet al_Asadi(۲).

But this cannot be accepted because there is no explicit evidence leading one to link the lineage of the two individuals. Nothing is known about the Saf’ir nor of his position in the congregation. Moreover, the year of his

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۱- al_Najashi, ۳۴۳; T. al_Fihrist, ۴۸.

۲- Javad ‘Ali, op. cit… in Der Islam, XXV (۱۹۳۹), ۱۹۹; Rajkowski, op. cit., ۶۶۷; al Najashi, ۲۲۲; T. al_Fihrist, ۲۴۳; al_Tusi mentions that the grandfather of ‘Uthman was ‘Amr, however, he does not link him with ‘Amr b. Hurayth; T. al-Ghayba, ۲۳۱.

birth and the details of his youth have not been handed down.

It is said that at the age of eleven ‘Uthman b. Said was contracted to become a servant in the house of the ninth Imam, al_Jaw_ad, and that he never left his service. Later he became his gate_keeper and chamberlain. As the Imam's "right hand", he enjoyed his entire confidence and was entrusted with the execution of all his commissions(۱).

Uthman b. Said occupied this same position of trust throughout the lifetime of‘ al_Hadi, the tenth Imam(۲), who was watched carefully and suspiciously by the government of the day, so that he even avoided speaking with the individual members of the community.

For this reason, al_Hadi presented ‘Uthman to those who found it difficult to consult him directly. He told them that ‘Uthman was his trusted associate and a man of honour, and that whatever he did was done in the Imam's name(۳).

Furthermore, al-Kashshi's account indicates that during the last ten years of the time of al_Hadi, the leadership of the underground organization (al-Wikala) was in

‘Uthman's hands. He organized its internal affairs and systematized the relations .between the centre of the organization and its branches in the remote provinces

When the agent, 'Ali b. ‘Amr, came to Samarra from Qazwin with money and contacted Faris b. Hatim, without knowing that the latter had been cursed by the Imam in ۲۵۰/۸۶۴, ‘ Uthmari quickly moved his lieutenants to save the money and prevented ‘Ali b. ‘Amr from having

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۱- Javad ‘Ali, op. cit., in Der Islam, XXV (۱۹۳۹), ۱۹۹.

۲- Dala'il, ۲۱۷.

۳- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۲۹.

contact with Faris b. Hatim(۱).

Uthman continued to hold this position of trust under the eleventh Imam al-‘Askari,‘ who appointed him using the same words as had his father. It is reported that al-‘Askari had only informed a few of his followers that ‘Uthman b. Said was his agent. However, at one point a group of Yemenite Shi’ites brought money to al- ‘Askari, and he revealed to them that ‘Uthman was his agent and that his son, Muhammad, would be the agent of the Twelfth Imam, al-Mahdi(۲).

According to another narration al-‘Askari presented his successor to forty reliable Shi’ites, such as al-Hasan b. Ayyub, ‘Ali b. Bilal, Ahmad b. Hilal, and ‘Uthman b. Said. He informed them that they would not see him again and commanded them to obey ‘Uthman during the concealment of the Twelfth Imam, because he would be his representative(۳).

Moreover, during the last illness of the eleventh Imam, ‘Uthman looked after him and cared for him. According to al-Tusi, he performed the last rites for the dead man, washed the corpse, wrapped him in his shroud and buried him. For the Imamites these are the unmistakeable signs that ‘Uthman was the rightful representative Saf’ir of the hidden Imam. They contended that ‘Uthman did all this on the orders of

.(al-'Askari(4)

The Career of the First Saf'ir .4

The first Saf'ir managed to satisfy the prominent Imamites who were already members of the organization that the Twelfth Imam was in a state of occultation and thus safe from his enemies, while also convincing them

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1- Ikhtiyar, 526.

2- T. al-Ghayba, 229-31.

3- T. al-Ghayba, 231-2; Kama'l, 435; for a full account of those men see al-Najashi, 41, 202, 323.

4- T. al-Ghayba, 231.

.that he was the rightful representative of the Imam

It appears that his occupation of the leadership of the organization during the time of the tenth and the eleventh Imams encouraged the agents to accept his claim and .(follow his instructions, without asking him to show a miracle or proof(1)

However, the ordinary Imamites, who had nothing to do with the organization, were confused by the occultation of the Imam and, as has been noted(2), held different views concerning the Twelfth Imam's successor. Many Imamites refused to pay the khums to 'Uthman b. Said unless he showed, by means of a miracle, that he had been rightfully appointed by the Twelfth Imam. This is illustrated by a narrative of :al-Kulayni attributed to Sa'd al-Ash'ari al-Qummi

Al-Hasan b. al-Nadr, Abu al-Saddam and a number of others spoke together after" the death of Abu Muhammad (the eleventh Imam) about the agents and decided to search for the new Imam. Al-Hasan b. Nadr came to Abu al-Saddam and said to him, '.'I desire to make the pilgrimage.' Abu al-Saddam said to him, 'Delay it this year

Al-Hasan b. al-Nadr said to him, 'I am frightened by my dreams, so I must go.' He

made Ahmad b. Ya'la b. Hammad his executor. The latter had devoted some money to the Imam. Hearing of al_Hasan's decision, he gave the money to al_Hasan and .commanded him not to hand anything over without proof

Al_Hasan said, 'When I arrived at Baghdad I rented a house. Thereafter an agent" brought me clothes

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.Kama'l, ٩٠, ٤٤١_٢; al_Kafi, I, ٣٢٩_٣٠; T. al-Ghayba, ١٥٧ -١

.For a full account see Chapter III -٢

and money and entrusted them to me. I said to him,"What is this?" He said to me, "It is what you see." Then another one brought similar goods, and a third one until they filled the house. Afterwards Ahmad b. Ishaq (the assistant of the Saf'ir) brought me all the goods he had. Thus I became confused. But later I received a message from al_Rajul (the Imam), peace be upon him, ordering me to take the goods to al_'Askar .((Samarra

When I arrived there I received a message ordering me to bring the goods (to him). . . So I loaded them in the baskets of the carriers. When I reached the corridor of his house, I found a black slave standing there. He asked me, "Are you al_Hasan b. al_Nadr?" I said, "Yes." He replied, "Enter." So I entered the house, and then I entered . . .an apartment, where I emptied the baskets of the carriers

There was a curtain leading to another apartment. Someone called me from behind it, "O al_Hasan b. al_Nadr, praise Allah for His grace is upon you, and do not doubt, for Satan would be pleased if you waver." Thereafter he sent out two garments for me " '.and said, "Take them, because you will need them." So I took them and went out

Sa'd al_Ash'ari reports that al_Hasan b. al_Nadr departed and died in the month of .(Ramadan, and the two garments were used as his shroud(١

This event was a clear proof

.al_Kafi, I, ۵۱۷_۸, ۵۲۲_۳ -۱

to al_Hasan, because both his name and his doubts concerning the validity of the agents' activities had been revealed to him. Moreover, according to Sa'd al_Ash'ari, the two garments which al_Hasan had received were a prediction of his death, which .occurred a month later

If one studies carefully the circumstances surrounding al_Hasan b. al_Nadr from the time of his decision to investigate the activities of the agents until his death, one can .surmise that the agents arranged them so as to remove his doubts

They would have done so because al_Hasan b. al_Nadr was prominent amongst the Imamites of Qumm(۱), and his doubts might have affected the Imamites of his area. So perhaps the agents of Qumm informed the Saf'ir in Baghdad about his arrival there. This can be understood from the act of Ahmad b. Ishaq and the other agents who brought the clothes to al_Hasan's house and later sent him a letter ordering him .to send the goods to Samarra

There, it is reported, he met the Imam, who confirmed for him the validity of the agent's activities. One can discover from this example and many others not quoted here(۲) the means used by the Saf'ir to remove the doubts and confusion of the Imamites brought about by the concealment of their Imam, and to make them obey .his instructions

As has already been indicated the Saf'ir forbade his partisans to ask about the name of the Imam. Perhaps, their silence along with al'Askari's last will in which he

Al_Kashshi gives his statement as regards al_Hasan b. al_Nadr along with his -۱ account of Abu Hamid al_Maraghi. He does not name explicitly the city which al_Hasan belonged to; Ikhtiyar, ۵۳۵. According to al_Mustawfi Maragha is a large town, and was

formerly the capital of Azerbayjan; al...Qazwini, Nuzhat al Qulub, ۸۸. However, there is evidence to support the claim that al...Hasan b. al Nadr was a native of Qumm. Al...Saduq reports that al...Hasan was from Qumm and listed him among the people who saw the twelfth Imam; Kama'l, ۴۴۲.

۲- Al...Kulayni reports in his account of the birth of the twelfth Imam sixteen narrations, elucidating the activities of the first Saf'ir with his followers. Most of these narrations indicate that he practiced miracles to persuade them that he was rightfully appointed by the Imam; al-Kafi:, I, ۵۱۴...۲۴, narrations nos. ۳, ۴, ۵, ۶, ۸, ۱۲...۱۷, ۲۰, ۲۱, ۲۳, ۲۸.

bequeathed his endowments to his mother and placed her in charge of his affair without referring to his successor(۱), encouraged the authorities to believe that the Imamites no longer had an Imam and, therefore, that any Imamite activities were useless. In doing so the Saf'ir gained a certain freedom to have communication with the Twelfth Imam and his followers. This is illustrated by a statement attributed to the Saf'ir:

The caliph thinks that Abu Muhammad (al...'Askari), peace be upon him, died childless." Thus his estate was divided and given to someone, who had no right in the estate but he (the Twelfth Imam) kept quiet. These are his agents carrying out their activities without being afraid that someone would stop them for investigation. If the (Imam's) name is identified, the (authorities) would start searching for (his whereabouts). So, by Allah, do not ask about his name."(۲)

The belief that al... 'Askari had no successor was circulated among some sunni scholars, such as Abu al...Qasim al...Balkhi (died around ۳۰۰/۹۱۲). In his account of the Imamite doctrine, he states, "In our time al...Hasan b. 'Ali died and had no son. Therefore they (the Imamites) became confused(۳).

Gradually this belief was so disseminated among the non...Imamite circles that leading sunni scholars such as Ibn Hazm (d. ۴۵۶/۱۰۶۳) and al...Shahristani (d. ۵۴۸/۱۱۵۳) were encouraged to view it as a matter of fact(۴). Later al-Dhahabi believed that al...'Askari left a son but he disappeared when he was nine years old or less in ۲۶۵/۸۷۸, when he entered

.al...Fusul al...'Ashra, ۱۳ -۱

.T. al-Ghayba, ۱۵۷...۸, al...Kafi, I, ۳۲۹...۳۰ -۲

.Abd al...Jabbar, al...Mugni (Cairo, ۱۹۶۳), II, ۱۷۶; quoted from al...Balkhi -۳

Milal, ۱۲۸; Fasl IV, ۱۸۱, however some later sunni scholars such as Abu Nu 'aym -۴ al...Asfahini, 'Abd al...Wahhab al...Sha'ram al...Maliki, al...Kunji al...Shafi'i and Sibt b. al...Jawzi held that al...Hasan al...'Askari had, in fact, left a son. For full account of the later sunnite views concerning the existence of the twelfth Imam, see Sulayman al...Qanduri, al...Hanafi; Yanabi al...Mawadda (al Istana, n.d.), ۴۵۱,۴۷۱,۴۹۱; Sadr al...Din .al...Sadr, op. cit., ۶۵...۷

.(a cellar (sardab) in Samarra and was not seen again(۱

In other words the Twelfth Imam died during the lifetime of the first Saf'ir. But al-Dhahabi is a later historian, since he died in ۷۴۸/۱۳۴۷. Moreover he does not give the source of his narration, nor does he state explicitly how al...'Askari's son died even though he presents his information concerning the concealment of the Twelfth Imam in the list of people who died in ۲۶۵/۸۷۸ to give the impression that he had passed away .in that year

The earliest report concerning the occultation of al'Askari's son in the cellar is given by al...Kanji, who died in ۰۸/۱۲۶۰, but he also does not mention the source of his .(information(۲

It is therefore most likely that al...Dhahabi based his report upon a belief common among the Imamite masses, that the Twelfth Imam had hidden himself in the cellar of his house. This belief spread after the fifth/eleventh century and later became popular .(among certain scholars, such as Ibn Khaldun(۳

Moreover, several reports in the early Imamite sources refute al-Dhahabi's narration and prove that the Twelfth Imam was alive after ۲۶۵/۸۷۸. Al...Tusi mentions that many of the Imamites received written answers to their letters from the Imam in the same handwriting as in the letters they used to receive during the lifetime of the first

Saf'ir(۴), and al…Saduq lists thirteen agents and forty…six ordinary Imamites from numerous cities who claimed to have seen the Twelfth Imam both during and after the time of

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.al…Dhahabi, al…'Ibar, II, ۳۱ -۱

.al…Kanji, op. cit., ۳۳۶…۷ -۲

Ibn Khaldun writes that the twelfth Imam disappeared in a cellar in Hilla. However, -۳ Hilla was established in ۴۹۵/۱۱۰۱ by Banu Mazyad whereas the occultation of the Imam, according to al…Dhahabi took place in ۲۶۵/۸۷۸. Thus it appears that Ibn Khaldun .also relied in his report on the popular belief; al Muqaddima (Cairo, ۱۳۲۲), ۱۵۷

Al…Tusi states that the second Saf'ir saw the twelfth Imam in Mecca holding the -۴ drapes of the Ka'ba. According to another report a certain Yusuf b. Ahmad al -Ja'fari on his way to Syria in ۳۰۹/۹۲۱ saw the Imam (T. al-Ghayba, ۱۶۲, ۱۶۶). For a full account of the letters of the Imamites and their answers) by the Imam, see T, al…Ghayba, .۱۸۴…۹۳; Muhammad al…Sadr, op. cit., ۱, ۴۰۳,۴۳۰

.(the first Saf'ir(۱

From this it is clear that al…Dhahabi's report is based on popular belief rather than upon sound historical facts. So it would be foolish to give credence to his claims .concerning the death and occultation of the Twelfth Imam

The Opposition to the First Saf'ir .۵

As has been noted the occultation of the Imam resulted in the gradual expansion of the role of the Saf'ir. However it also made it easier for a pretender to the deputyship (al…sifara or al…niyaba) to practice his activities among the Imamites at the expense of the Imam's rightful representative. As we have seen, this was practiced mainly .(throughout the period of the short occultation by the extremists (al…Ghulat

That they were extremists is indicated by a number of factors. Firstly, the claimant to .(the sifara believed in the incarnation of God (hulul)(۲

Most of the claimants to the sifara from the time of al_Hasan al-Shari'i up until al_Shalmaghani claimed first that they were the agents of the Imam. Then when the Imam excommunicated them, they called people on their own account. Extremists had claimed to be the Imam's representative even before the occultation of the Twelfth Imam, but with a slight difference.

The claimant would first announce that he was the Gate (Bab) of the Imam, and then claim that he was a prophet. Al_Kashshi mentions many extremists who did so, such as Muhammad b. Furat, al_Qasim al_Yaqtini and Ali b. Haska(۳).

The third factor indicating that the claimants were extremists is that certain links existed between the extremists

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۱- Kama'l, ۴۴۲_۳.

۲- Abu al_Fida, al_Mukhtasar, II, ۸۰_I; al_Kamil, VIII, ۲۱۹_۲۰.

۳- Ikhtiyar, ۵۱۸, ۵۲۰, ۵۵۵.

active during the time of the tenth and eleventh Imams and the claimants who lived during the time of the short occultation.

According to al_Kashshi, Ali b. Haska was the teacher of Muhammad b. Musa al_Shari'i, al-Qasim al_ Yaqtini and al_Hasan b. Muhammad b. Baba(۱). The last of these was a close follower of Muhammad b. Nusayr, who led the extremists trend during the time of the eleventh Imam, and then claimed that he was the agent of the Twelfth Imam(۲). Morever, Ibn Nusayr was supported by some of Banu Furat, the descendants of the extremist Muhammad b. Furat(۳).

According to al_Tusi, Abu Muhammad al_Hasan al_Shari'i'(۴) was the first to claim falsely to be the Imam's representative during the short occultation, but the Imamites cursed him and refused to accept him. Then the Twelfth Imam issued a Tawqi; in which he excommunicated al_Shari'i and announced the falseness of his claim(۵).

Although al-Shari'i did not achieve immediate success, his following grew in strength .and eventually he formed a strong threat to the leadership of the second Saf'ir

The Imam's Wikala During the Time of the First Saf'ir .۶

point

The main problem facing any historian dealing with the period of the short occultation is that most of the activities of the Twelfth Imam and his representatives were carried out underground. Perhaps for this reason, the Imamite scholars such as al_Kulayni, 'Abd Allah b. Ja'far al_Himyari, Sa'd al_Ash 'ari and al_Hasan b. Musa al-Nawbakhti rarely mention the names of the Imam's agents, or refer to their activities or links with each other: however, they do refer

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.Ikhtiyar, ۵۲۱ -۱

۲ - According to al_Tabrani (a Nusayri writer), the Nusayriyya movement was established by 'Ali b. Ahmad al_Tarba'i, who during the time of al_'Askari gained thirty_five partisans in the village of Tarba' and other followers in Ninawa near Hilla. Then he attracted Muhammad b. Nusayr to his side. The latter led the movement along with his student al_Husayn b. Harridan during the time of the short occultation. In ۳۳۶/۹۴۷ the movement became independent from the Imamites, and gave more emphasis to the role ofthe Gate (Bab) than the Imam himself; al_Tabrani, Sabil Rah at .al_Arwah, in Der Islam, XXVII (۱۹۴۶), ۱۲۹_۳۱

.T. al-Ghayba, ۲۵۹ -۳

-۴ Al_Tusi mentions that al_Shari i was an adherent of the tenth Imam and that he is not sure about his real name. Al_Kashshi mentions a certain Muhammad b. Musa al_Shari'i or al_Sharif amongst the Ghulat during the time of the tenth Imam. It is most likely that he is the same person discussed by al_Tusi; Ikhtiyar, ۵۲۱

.T. al-Ghayba, ۲۵۸ -۵

.to those of their activities which did not attract the attention of the authorities

Therefore, the historical information concerning the underground activities of the agents is to be found scattered throughout the theological and heresiographical works much more than in the histories. Because of the nature of these works the historical information has taken on a heresiographical form. In addition, both questions asked by the Shi'ites and answers of the Twelfth Imam and his Saf'irs were .collected during his time, but unfortunately, most of them have been lost

Only a few are extant, especially in works dealing with the concealment (Ghayba). For example the second Saf'ir Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. 'Uthman, collected the pronouncements of his father, but his collection is not extant. However, many anecdotes which assist us in discovering the links among the Imam's agents and the .nature of their activities have been recorded

A) Iraq: The Centre of the Wikala

After the death of the eleventh Imam, the first Saf'ir had not the slightest reason to remain in Samarra, which was then the capital and the headquarters of the troops of .the 'Abbasid dynasty, which had opposed the Imams from the very beginning

Perhaps for this reason, 'Uthman b. Said wanted to carry out the activities of the organization beyond the surveillance of the authorities in the capital. Therefore he moved to Baghdad, where he made the area of alKarkh, which was inhabited by .(Shi'ites, the centre for the leadership of the organization(۱

A part of 'Uthman's prudent fear (al_Taqiyya) was to evade the investigation

Javad 'Ali, op. cit., in Der Islam, XXV (۱۹۳۹), ۲۰۳; In his account of al_Karkh district -۱ al_Baghdadi states that many places were inhabited by Rafidites (Shi'ites); al_Khatib, .I, ۸۱

of the regime by not involving himself in any open political or religious arguments. He also disguised himself as a butter_seller (samman) and, used to bring money to the Imam in a butter_sack. Consequently he acquired the nickname al_Zayyat or

.(al‑Samman(۱

Al‑Kashshi reports that his name was Hafs b. ‘Amr al‑‘Umari(۲), which may have been a pseudonym he used when he held underground meetings with other agents.

It has been noted that the Twelfth Imam was sent by his father to Medina in ۲۵۹/۸۷۳. However, the first Saf’ir made Baghdad the centre of the organization. He followed the traditional geographical divisions of the Islamic provinces in organizing the underground political units (cells) of the organization. Nevertheless he took into consideration the size of each factional unit, the distance of each area from the capital, and its situation on the main roads.

According to al‑Kashshi, ‘Uthman b. Said was the head of the Wikala from the time of the eleventh Imam, in the sense that all the revenue sent by the adherents to the Imam through his agents was given in the end to ‘Uthman, who in turn handed it over .(to the Imam(۳

Many agents were situated below the Saf’ir in the ranks of the organization in Baghdad and in the other cities of Iraq, such as Hajiz b. Yazid al‑Washsha', Ahmad b. Ishaq al‑Ash’ari and Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Ja’far al‑Qattan, the last two of whom were the chief assistants of the first Saf’ir.

Ahmad b. Ishaq was at first

۱- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۲۹.

۲- Ikhtiyar, ۵۳۲.

۳- Ikhtiyar, ۵۸۰.

al‑ ‘Askari's agent for his endowments awqaa in Qumm(۱). However, after the death of al‑ ‘Askari the sources begin to refer to his activities in Baghdad as assistant to ‘Uthman b. Said in the financial affairs of the organization. AlKulayni reports that in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴ some people from the east doubted the validity of the agents after al‑ ‘Askari's

death and for this reason they came to Baghdad. Along with other agents Ahmad b. Ishaq managed to remove their doubts(۲).

The first Saf’ir may have summoned him from Qumm because he needed his service in Iraq after al‒ ‘Askari's death. According to Ibn Rustam al‒Tabari, Ahmad b. Ishaq continued his career in the organization in Iraq until his death during the time of the second Saf’ir(۳).

Muhammad al‒Qattan was the second agent of the Saf’ir in Baghdad. In order to hide his activities he disguised himself as a cotton dealer. The agents used to bring money and letters to him hidden in cotton which he then took to the Saf’ir(۴).

Ibn Rustam reports that in ۲۶۱‒۳/۸۷۵‒۶ the people of Dinawar collected ۱۶,۰۰۰ dinars, which were entrusted to a certain Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Dinawari. At Qarmisin(۵) he collected ۱,۰۰۰ dinars more and some garments. After an intensive search in Baghdad and Sdmarra, he received in Samarra a letter describing the money and other items and ordering him to take them to ‘Uthman b. Sa’id and to follow his instructions.

The latter ordered al‒Dinawari to hand over the items to al‒Qattan(۶). It is

p: ۱۴۲

۱- al‒Qummi, Tarikhi Qumm, ۲۱۱.

۲- al-Kafi, I, ۵۱۷‒۸.

۳- Dala'il, ۲۷۲, ۲۷۵‒۷.

۴- Bihar, LI, ۳۱۶‒۷.

۵ - Qarmisin: A small town in the province of Jabal about thirty‒one farsakhs from Hamadan. Ibn Khurdadhba, al‒Masalik wa‒l‒Mamalik (Leiden, ۱۸۸۹), ۴۱, ۱۹۸.

۶- Bihar, LI, ۳۰۰‒۳; Dala'il, ۲۸۳‒۵.

reported that al‒Qattan had dealings with an agent in Tus called al‒Hasan b. al‒Fadl b. Zayd al‒Yamani. According to al Mufid, al‒Yamani used to deal with al‒Qattan as if he were the Saf’ir(۱).

The third agent of the Saf’ir in Baghdad was Hajiz. His relations with a large number of agents indicate that he held a high position in the organization. He was perhaps the connecting link between the agents in the eastern provinces and the Saf’ir in Baghdad, especially since al…Saduq and al…Kulayni mention certain persons from the cities of Balkh and Marv who contacted the Imam and his Saf’ir through Hajiz(۲).

While the first Saf’ir seems to have led the affairs of the organization in Baghdad with the help of his three assistants, he may also have directly supervised the activities of his agents in the other main cities, such as al…Mada in, Kufa, Wasit, Basra and al…Ahwaz.

In the last of these the leadership of the Wikala had been in the hands of Banu Mazyar or Mahzayar from the time of the ninth Imam. Al…Kashshi reports that the agent of the Imam in al…Ahwaz, Ibrahim b. Mazyar, had collected a large amount of money.

On his deathbed he revealed to his son Muhammad a special secret code and ordered him to hand the money over to the person who would disclose to him his knowledge of this code.

Al…Kashshi adds that when Muhammad arrived at Baghdad, al…‘Umari the Saf’ir came to him and divulged to him the exact code,

p: ۱۴۳

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۱ - al…Irshad, ۳۹۹. For the relations of al…Qattan with the eastern provinces, see Ikhtiyar, ۵۳۵.

۲ - Kama’l, ۴۸۸, ۴۹۹; al-Kafi, I, ۵۲۱; Bihar, LI, ۲۹۴, ۲۹۵…۶.

so he handed the money over to him(۱). It is clear from this report that the first Saf’ir had already agreed on the code with Ibrahim al…Mazyar so as to save the organization from infiltration and misuse by false agents.

According to al…Kulayni and al…Mufid, a few days later Muhammad received a letter of

.(promotion indicating that he was installed in the post of his father in al‑Ahwaz(٢

This underground system of communication between the Saf'ir in Baghdad and the agent in al‑Ahwaz was similar to other such systems which existed at this stage .(between the Saf'ir and his other agents in Iraq, such as Banu al‑Rakuli in Kufa(٣

B) The Second Area: Egypt, the Hijaz and Yemen

The main centre for the organization in this area seems to have been Medina. It is reported that al‑ 'Askari had many agents there amongst the 'Alids (al‑Talibiyyin). However, after al‑ 'Askari's death, some of them denied the existence of his son, the .Twelfth Imam

According to al‑Kulayni, those who held that al‑ 'Askari had left a son received letters confirming them in their posts, whereas the deniers did not receive such letters which .(showed that they were dismissed from their posts in the Wikala(۴

Another report indicates that the principal agent in Medina in ٢۶۴/٨٧٧‑٨ was Yahya b. Muhammad al‑ 'Arid(۵). Unfortunately, the sources neither explain how the Saf'ir in Baghdad used to contact his agents in Hijaz, nor do they refer to the connecting links among the agents of Egypt, Hijaz and Yemen. However, it is most likely that

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.Ikhtiyar, ۵٣١ -١

.al-Kafi, I, ۵١٨; al‑Irshad, ٣٩٧ -٢

al‑Fusul al‑'Ashara, ١٧; According to al‑Mufid Banu al‑Rakuli were the agents of the -٣ Imam in Kufa; however, after the death of the first Saf'ir, the sources begin to refer to .Banu Zuzara and Banu al‑Zajawzji as the agents in Kufa. The two different names seem to refer to one family. Perhaps the correct spelling of this name is الركولی الزجوزجی .T. al-Ghayba, ١٩٨‑٢٠٠ .الركولی but the copyist of al‑Mufid's work misread it as الزجوزجی

.al‑Kafi, ١, ۵١٨‑٩ -۴

Kama'l, ۴٩۶‑٧; al‑Saduq reports that al‑'Aridi knew the place of the twelfth Imam in -۵ .Medina and guided a person from Kashmir to the Imam; Kama'l, ۴٩٧, ۴۴٠

.(the agents used the occasion of the pilgrimage to communicate with each other(١

But it seems that the Saf'ir did not keep in direct contact with his agent in Medina and preferred to employ slaves who were mostly ignorant and irreligious as the connecting link. He did this to keep the attention of the authorities away from such .activities

The agents in Egypt followed the instructions of the agents in Hijaz, especially as regards their contact with the centre in Iraq. AlKulayni reports a narration attributed .(to al_Hasan b. 'Isa al_ Aridi, who was probably the agent in Mecca(٢

He says that after the death of al_ Askari, an Egyptian came to Mecca with money for the Imam, but was confused because some people held that al_ 'Askari had died without a son and that the Imam was his brother Ja'far, whereas other people .informed him that al_ 'Askari had, in fact, left a successor

Afterwards he sent a certain person called Abu Talib to Samarra with a letter, probably a recommendation from the agent in Mecca. In Samarra Abu Talib first contacted Ja'far, asking him for proof so that he could accept his Imamate, but Ja'far .could not produce any

Therefore he went to the Gate (Bab, deputy), who gave him a strong proof that he was the rightful representative of the new Imam (the Twelfth), by revealing to him that his master, the Egyptian, had entrusted him with money to deal with according to his wish. For this reason

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.al_Irshad, ۴٠١ -١

.al-Kafi, I, ۵٢٣ -٢

Abu Talib handed over the money to the Bab and received a letter in reply to his .(letter(١

Perhaps the agent in Mecca had sent forward complete information concerning the case of his Egyptian colleague.

Yemen was a traditional region for Shi ‘ite tendencies. Al_Hadi had had agents there since ۲۴۸/۸۶۲,(۲) and there were agents who had direct contact with ‘Uthman b. Said during the time of al_ Askari(۳).

According to al_Kulayni, the chief agent in Yemen during the time of the Twelfth Imam was Ja’far b. Ibrahim, who was related to a family working in the Imamite organization in Hamadan, Kufa and Yemen(۴). A report mentioned by al_Najashi indicates that the connecting link between the agents in Yemen and the first Saf’ir was ‘Ali b. al_Husayn al_Yamani(۵).

C) The Third Area: Azerbayjan and Arran

The third area was Azerbayjan. According to Muhammad al-Safwani(۶), the agent there was al_Qasim b. al_ ‘Ala, who had held the post from the time of al_Hadi and who continued his activities from the province of Arran(۷) during the time of the Twelfth Imam. The Twelfth Imam remained in touch with al_Qasim until the latter died during the time of the third Saf’ir, when his post was given to his son al Hasan at the Twelfth Imam's order.

Al_Safwani does not mention the name of the connecting link between the agent of this area and the centre of the organization. However, he states explicitly that al-Qasim b. al_‘Ala was in direct contact with the Saf’ir in Iraq through a messenger, who used to deal

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۱- al-Kafi, I, ۵۲۳. Al_Mufid relates the same report but both of them did not give the name of the agent of the Imam in Samarra, al_Irshad, ۴۰۱.

۲- Ikhtiyar, ۵۲۷; al-Kafi, I, ۵۱۹.

۳- T. al_Ghayba. ۲۱۶.

۴- al_Najashi, ۲۶۴.

.al-Kafi. I, ٥١٩_٢٠ -٥

According to al_Tusi, al_Safwani was the assistant of al_Qasim b. al_'Ala during the -٦ time of the third Saf'ir; another report indicates that he met the second Saf'ir in Baghdad in ٣٠٧/٩١٩; T. al-Ghayba, ٢٠٣_٥

Al_Safwani reports that Arran was a city in Azerbayjan, but it is well known among -٧ the geographers that Arran is a province and that its capital was Barda'. It is included in the great triangle of land lying to the west of the junction point ofthe rivers Ayrus .(Kur) and Araxas (al_Ras); T. al-Ghayba, ٢٠٤

.(with him without revealing his name(١

D) The Fourth Area: Qumm and Dinawar

It is well_known that Qumm was a traditional area for the Shi'ites, the bulk of whom were Arab(٢), and that there were many endowments (awqaf) for the Imams in Qumm. Therefore, it probably received more attention from the first Saf'ir, who used to keep in direct contact not only with the agent of Qumm but also with the other .agents in the province of Jabal

The prominent agent in Qumm was 'Abd Allah b. Ja'far al_Himyari(٣), who remained in this post during the time of the second Saf'ir(٤). Moreover, there were many sub_ agents in numerous cities with a considerable Imamite population, such as Dinawar, whose agent in ٢٦١_٣/٨٧٥_٦ was Ahmad b. Muhammad al_Dinawari. The agent in .(Qurmisin was Ahmad al-Madra'i(٥

E) The Fifth Area: Rayy and Khurasan

Al_Kashshi's account of the situation of the organization during the time of the tenth and the eleventh Imams indicates that the latter had several agents in various cities in Khurasan and the eastern provinces, extending as far as the city of Kabul. Those agents, along with other sub_agents, used to carry out their missions according to the direct instruction of the Imam. For example, al_'Askari sent Ayyub b. al_Nab to .(Nisapur as his agent(٦

However, the penetration of the movement into remote regions of the east, the rise

of the Zaydite state in Tabaristan from ۲۵۰/۸۶۴, and the continual military activities of the Khawarij in Sijistan, which caused a great deal of trouble for Imamites(۷), all helped make it difficult for al...

p: ۱۴۷

۱- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۰۴.

۲- Ibn Hawqal, al...Masalik wa...l...Mamalik, ۲۶۴; al...Subki, op. cit., III, ۲۳۰, ۲۳۳.

۳- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۲۹...۳۰.

۴- al...Najashi ۱۶۲...۳.

۵- Bihar, LI, ۳۰۰, quoted from Kitab al...Nujum.

۶- Ikhtiyar, ۵۴۲...۳, ۵۲۷.

۷ - Al...Kashshi's report indicates that the relations between the Khawarij and the Imamites in Sijistan were tense. He states that al...Fadl b. Shadhan escaped from the Khawarij when they attacked Bayhaq, but he died during his escape; Ikhtiyar, ۵۴۳. Al...Isfahani reports that the Khawarij killed an ‘Alid called Muhammad b. Ja’far b. Muhammad; Maqatil, ۴۵۳.

‘Askari to supervise directly the activities in each area.

Therefore al... ‘Askari issued a letter ordering the activities of the agents in Bayhaq and Nisapur to be linked with those of the agents in Rayy so that the two former cities could only receive his instructions from the agent in Rayy, who was to take his orders directly from ‘Uthman b. Said in Samarra.

According to this letter al... ‘Askari appointed Ishaq b. Muhammad as his agent in Nisapur, commanding him to pay the dues to Ibrahim b. ‘Abda, his agent in Bayhaq and its districts. The latter in turn was commanded to hand the dues to the agent of Rayy, Muhammad b. Ja’far al...Razi or to the person appointed by al...Razi.

At the end of his letter the Imam pointed out that all the khums and other taxes which were sent by his followers should be given to ‘Uthman b. Said, who would then hand them to him(۱). Such a statement reveals that ‘Uthman b. Said was at the top of the organization before the death of al...‘Askari in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴.

After the death of al… 'Askari the first Saf'ir followed the system of communication which had been practiced before. Several anecdotes reveal that he directed the activities of this area through the agent in Rayy, al…Rgazi, who in turn directly supervised the activities of the agents in Bayhaq, Nisapur(۲), and perhaps Hamadan.

There were many sub…agents of different ranks below the main agent in each city. Al…Najashi reports a

p: ۱۴۸

۱- ۵۷۵…۸ ,۵۰۹…۱۰ ,Ikhtiyar.

۲- ۵۷۵…۸۰ ,۵۰۹…۱۰ ,al-Kafi, I, ۵۲۳…۴; Ikhtiyar.

narration which elucidates this system. He mentions that al…Qasim b. Muhammad al…Hamadani, Bistam b. 'Ali and 'Aziz b. Zuhayr were sub…agents in one place in Hamadan and carried out their task under the instructions and commands of al-Hasan b. Harun b. 'Umran al…Hamadani(۱). Al…Najashi does not explain how the latter used to contact the Saf'ir.

Al…Kulayni, however, reports that Muhammad b. Harun b. 'Umran al…Hamadani, the brother of the agent of Hamadan, made his shops an endowment (waqf) to the Twelfth Imam and wanted to hand them over to his agent, whose identity was unknown to him.

Thereafter Muhammad b. Ja'far al…Razi, the agent of Rayy, received an order to take these shops as waqf (۲) in his capacity as wakil for the whole of Iran. This narration reveals that there was a strong link between the agent of Rayy and the agent of Hamadan and that the latter was below al…Razi in the ranks of the organization(۳).

Since the agents in this area held different ranks within the organization, it is most likely that this system existed in the other areas of the organization as well.

۷. The Death of the First Saf'ir

Despite the important role of the first Saf'ir, 'Uthman b. Said, no one gives the date of

his death. Modern historians have tried to supply plausible dates. Hashim al…Hasani thinks that the deputyship (al-sifara) of 'Uthman b. Said continued until the year ۲۶۵/۸۷۹,(۴) but he does not give any source for this information. In contrast Javad Ali :states as follows

Twenty years after the withdrawal of"

.al…Najashi, ۲۶۴…۵ -۱

.al…Kafi, I, ۵۲۴ -۲

Although there is no clear statement concerning the links between al…Razi and -۳ Hamadan. there is ample evidence that al…Razi controlled the activities of all the agents in Iran, so it is more than probable that he directed those of al…Hasan b. Harun, .especially in view of this narration

.Hashim al…Hasam, op. cit., II, ۵۶۸ -۴

the Twelfth Imam, in the year ۲۸۰/۸۹۳, the first Saf'ir died, according to a tawqi, said to have been addressed by the hidden Imam to the son of the first Saf'ir and the Shi'ite congregation, in which after expressing sentiments of condolence on the death of such a pious man, the Imam appointed his son Abu Ja'far (Muhammad) as his (successor."(۱

However, Javad Ali relied on al…Tusi, who only indicates that the narrator, Muhammad b. Humam, heard the narration from Muhammad al…Razi in ۲۸۰/۸۹۳; he does not cite .(any date for the death of the first Saf'ir(۲

Furthermore, it seems that the first Saf'ir did not remain in office for a long period, because al…Tusi reports that when Muhammad b. 'Uthman (Abu Ja'far) succeeded his father, a certain Ahmad b. Hilal al… Abarta'i, whose death occurred in ۲۶۷/۸۸۰…۱,(۳) denied that Abu Ja'far was the Saf'ir of the Twelfth Imam after his father.(۴)" Hence the death of the first Saf'ir must have occurred after ۲۶۰/۸۷۴, the date of the death of .the eleventh Imam, and before ۲۶۷/۸۸۰

According to Ibn Barina, ‘Uthman b. Sa’id was buried on the western side of Baghdad in the Darb Mosque. This mosque takes its name from its position at Darb Jibla, an avenue in the Maydan street(۵). Al…Tusi confirms Ibn Barina's report when he states that he saw the grave in a place which he used to visit every month between the (years ۴۰۴/۱۰۱۳ and ۴۳۳/۱۰۴۰.(۶

The Underground Activities of the Second Saf’ir of the Twelfth Imam

The Designation of the Second Saf’ir, Abu Ja’far .۱

point

The second Saf’ir was Muhammad b. ‘Uthman b. Said

۱- ۲۰۵ ,(۱۹۳۹) Javad Ali op. cit., in Der Islam, XXV.

۲- ۲۳۵ ,T. al-Ghayba.

۳- ۶۵ ,al…Najashi.

۴- ۲۶۰ ,T. al-Ghayba.

۵- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۳۲. Although Ibn Barina states that the location of the grave was on the western side of Baghdad, today there is a grave within a mosque located in an avenue leading to the Maydan crossroad on the eastern side of Baghdad. The Imamites believe that this is the grave of ‘Uthman b. Said.

۶- ۲۳۲…۳ ,T. al-Ghayba.

al…‘Umari. His kunya was Abu Ja’far. He carried out his activities first as the agent of the Twelfth Imam and then as his Saf’ir for about fifty years, having been the principal assistant of his father, the first Saf’ir, from the time of the eleventh Imam, al… ‘Askari. According to al…Tusi, when the first Saf’ir died, Abu Ja’far carried out the last rites for the dead man, washed the corpse, clad him in his shroud and buried him.

For the Imamites, these are the unmistakable signs that Abu Ja’far was acting as the representative and the Saf’ir of the hidden Imam. According to them he did all this at the order of the first Saf’ir. Moreover he was promoted to the office of the sifara both

by the designation of al…‘Askari and of the first Saf’ir, ‘Uthman b. Said, according to .(the order of the Twelfth Imam(١

After his father's death, Abu Ja’far received a letter of condolence attributed to the Twelfth Imam, who offered his sympathy at his father's death and pointed out that he .(had been installed in his office(٢

However, some of the principal agents of the organization had serious reservations and doubts about his designation, as did Muhammad b. Nusayr, the leader of the extremist trend, the Ghulat. So Abu Ja’far did not succeed to his office without .encountering certain difficulties

A) Ibn Hilal

Ahmad b. Hilal al…‘Abarta'i was one of those who denied the validity of Abu Ja’far's designation. He was born in the year ١٨٠/٧٩۶ in ‘Abarta', a village

p: ١۵١

.T. al-Ghayba, ٢٣٠-١, ٢٣٣, ٢٣۶; Kama’l, ۴٣٢ -١

.T. al-Ghayba, ٢٣۵; Kama’l, ۵١٠ -٢

in the district of Askaf near Nahrawan, and died in the year ٢۶٧/٨٨٠. It is clear from the numerous references to his name in the chain of transmissions (isnad) of the Imamite narrations that he was a well…known theologian who had narrated most of the Shiite .(books of traditions (usul

Beginning in ٢٠۴/٨١٩ he had related several traditions indicating, that the Twelfth .(Imam would be al-Qa’im, having first gone into occultation(١

Al-Kashshi reports that he was a pious mystic and an eminent scholar, and some biographers respectfully mention the fact that he undertook fifty…fourpilgrimages to Mecca, twenty of them on foot(٢). According to a letter attributed to the Twelfth Imam, Ibn Hilal was one of the most important scholars in Iraq during the time of the first Saf’ir and possessed an amount of money belonging to the Imam, which he

refused to pay to the second Saf'ir(3).

The Imamite reports of his refusal to obey Abu Ja'far's instructions are confused and contradictory so it is rather difficult to discover the true state of affairs. According to al_Najashi Ibn Hilal had already been cursed by al_'Askari, who had spoken against him on several occasions(4).

Sa'd al_Qummi states that he abandoned Shi'ism and embraced the nasb doctrine(5), whereas al_Tusi accused him of holding an extremist doctrine (ghuluw)(6).

It is clear that the different accusations made against him are attempts to define his beliefs rather than explanations of his dispute with the second Saf'ir. Al_Tusi mentions a report attributed to an agent called Muhammad b.

p: ۱۵۲

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۱ - T. al-Fihrist, ۱-۵۰; T. Tahdhib al-Ahkam, IV, ۱۳۴; T. al-Ghayba, ۱-۱۰۰. Most of the narrations attributed to Ibn Hilal come on the authority of Sad al-Ash'ari al-Qummi, which reveals that Ibn Hilal had a high position among the Imamites before he was excommunicated by the Saf'irs (Ikhtiyar, ۱۸, ۱۴۱, ۵۰۳, ۶۰۳). For the narration concerning the twelfth Imam being al-Qa'im related on the authority of Ibn Hilal, see Kama'l, ۲۵۲-۳, ۳۵۰, ۶۴۹; al-Kafi, I, ۳۴۲; N. al-Ghayba, ۱۷۵, ۱-۱۰۰, ۱۴۹, ۲۸۳.

۲ - Ikhtiyar, ۵۳۵.

۳ - al-Sadr, op. cit., I, ۵۰۱.

۴ - al-Najashi, ۶۵.

۵ - al-Saduq, Mashyakhat al-Faqih, IV, ۱۲۸. Al-Nasb literally means to declare war on someone, or to show open hostility to someone. In the Shiite works the tern al-nasb has been used to define a doctrine of a group of people called al-Nawasib (pl. of nasib). The Nawasib were mainly distinguished by their hostility towards the People of the House (Ahl al-Bayt). Al-Kulayni considers Ahmad, the son of the 'Abbasid vizier 'Ubayd Allah b. Khaqan, as one of them, and adds that al-Qa'im would order them to pay the jizya (al-Kafi, I, ۵۰۳, ۵۰۸, VIII, ۲۲۷, ۱۰۱, ۱-۱۶۰). The Khawarij were amongst the Nawasib and al-Tusi considered them as infidels (kuffar) and forbade the Shiites from

having any social relations with them. Furthermore, he permitted the Imamites to .confiscate their money; al-Tusi, Tahdhib al-Ahkam, IV, ۲۲; al-Istibsar, III, ۱۸۳-۴

.T. al-Fihrist, ۵۰-۱; al-Tabarsi, al-Ihtijaj, II, ۲۸۹ -۶

Humam, which states that Ibn Hilal denied neither the existence of the Twelfth Imam .nor the validity of the office of the first Saf'ir

When Ibn Hilal was questioned about this by the Imamites, he replied that the Imam had personally installed the first Saf'ir, 'Uthman b. Said, and made this known 'to all .(the faithful, but he had not done any such thing for Abu Ja'far(۱

Because of Ibn Hilal's attitude towards the second safar he was expelled by the Imam in a letter distributed amongst the agents in Iraq which warned that the mystical .(practices of Ibn Hilal grew from hypocrisy and dissimulation(۲

Despite the fact that the eminent agents of the organization already knew the cause of Ibn Hilal's excommunication, some of the Imamite narrators in Iraq who were not agents were astonished at the excommunication of such a pious mystic, and so they rejected the pronouncement. In fact the considerable support for Ibn Hilal may have been brought about by the Iraqi narrators who did not know about the dispute .between Abu Ja'far and Ibn Hilal concerning the sifara

They asked the agent al_Qasim b. al_'Ala to inquire about the pronouncement against Ibn Hilal, and he put this question in writing to the Imam via the second Saf'ir. The :Imam replied

Ibn Hilal was an incorrigible sinner and Allah will not forgive his sins. He behaved like" a stubborn and arrogant person. Moreover, he has kept for himself money given for the Imam and refused to carry out

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.T. al-Ghayba, ۲۶۰ -۱

.Kama'l, ۴۸۹; al-Sadr, op. cit., I, ۵۰۰ -۲

our commands unless they suit his wishes. However we kept our composure until Allah fulfilled our prayer by taking away his soul.

Concerning his case, we had informed a few of our close associates (mawali) during his time and ordered them to reveal it to the intimates among our adherents. . . There is no excuse for any of our followers to doubt the statements of our confidantes (thuqatuna), because we reveal these statements to them."(1)

This document shows clearly that Ibn Hilal had died, but that in spite of the Imam's strong criticism of him, the second Saf'ir could not completely eliminate the danger he had stirred up for his office. Al-Kashshi reports that a group of people remained firm in their loyalty towards Ibn Hilal and doubted the authenticity of the above pronouncement(2).

In fact the loyalty of this body to Ibn Hilal was mainly based not upon his inward spiritual faith, but upon his external and personal mystic acts. According to the Imamite doctrine, the worship of Allah is invalid without the recognition of and obedience to the Imams(3). Hence the mystic acts of Ibn Hilal were invalid, because he refused to recognise the second Saf'ir, who had been installed by the Imam himself.

According to al...Tusi, the influence of Ibn Hilal continued until the time of the third safar, Ibn Ruh, who circulated another Tawqi' on the authority of the Imam against Ibn Hilal(4):

"Although there are those among the Imamites who do not understand how such a great and

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۱- Ikhtiyar, ۵۳۶-۷.

۲- Ikhtiyar, ۵۳۷.

۳- According to the Imamites, Islam is based on five pillars: prayer, zakat, fasting,

pilgrimage, and the Wilaya, that is, the recognition of the Imam, to which they gave priority over the pillars. Therefore if a person spends all his life performing the other four Islamic pillars but does not recognize the Imam, his worship is invalid. For a full account of this point, see al-Kafi, I, ۱۸۱-۴, ۳۷۴-۵, II, ۱۸-۱۹.

T. al-Ghayba, ۲۶۰ -۴.

pious man could have been excommunicated, what is piety if it please Allah to transform good deeds into sins? Al_Dihqan(۱) was also a pious man in the service of the Imam, yet Allah eventually changed his faith into impiety because of his arrogance. This also happened to Ibn Hilal"(۲)

In fact it is hard to attribute this Tawqi'to the time of the third Saf'ir, Ibn Ruh ۳۰۵_۳۲۶/۹۱۷_۹۳۷), because during that time there is no trace of the influence of Ibn Hilal's claim upon the Imamites. It is most likely that Ibn Ruh circulated this pronouncement against Ibn Hilal on the order of the second Saf'ir while he was still working as an agent beneath him, expecially if one bears in mind that Ibn Hilal died in ۲۶۷/۸۸۰, a long time before Ibn Ruh held the sifara. It would appear that Ibn Hilal's challenge had vanished before the death of the second Saf'ir in ۳۰۵/۹۱۷.

B) al_Bilali

According to al_Tusi, a second opponent to Abu Ja'far's claim to the sifara was Abu Tahir Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Bilal, who was commonly called al_Bilali(۳). He was well known in Imamite circles as a narrator of traditions(۴). Furthermore he was amongst the principal agents in Baghdad and had close relations with both the tenth and the eleventh Imams(۵).

The latter described al_Bilali to Ishaq b. Ibrahim al_Nisaburi with this phrase: "He is reliable, trustworthy and is acquainted with what he must do.(۶)" Moreover, according to al-Kulayni and al_Saduq, al_'Askari twice revealed to al_Bilali the birth of his son,

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۱- Al-Dihqan is 'Urwa b. Yahya al-Nakhkhas al-Baghdadi; he is said to have been the

wakil and treasurer of the eleventh Imam, al-’Askari. But he was deposed and cursed because he seized the money of the organization and burnt the documents of the Imam, which were kept in the treasury; Ikhtiyar, ۵۷۳, ۵۷۹.

۲- Ikhtiyar, ۵۳۶-۷.

۳- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۶۰.

۴- al-Najashi, ۲۵۴-۵; Ikhtiyar, ۵۶۴, ۵۶۶.

۵- al-Barqi, al-Rijal, ۵۷, ۶۱.

۶- Al-Kashshi mentions a document attributed to al-’Askari containing instructions to his agents in Iraq and Khurasan, in which he ordered Ishaq al-Nisaburi to contact al-Bilali in Baghdad; Ikhtiyar, ۵۷۹.

the Twelfth Imam: firstly in ۲۵۸/۸۷۱ and then three days before his death (۱).

However, al...Bilali denied that Abu Ja’far was the Saf’ir and claimed that he himself was the agent of the Imam. He kept the money of the Imam in his own hands and refused to relinquish it to Abu Ja’far. Al-Bilalis claim led to a serious split amongst the Imamites, since a considerable body of Imamites accepted his claim and followed him, such as his brother Abu al...Tayyib and Ibn Hirz (۲). But al...Tusi neither fixes the date of this split nor the duration of al...Bilalis claims.

It is most likely that al...Bilali's claim lasted only for a few years after the death of the first Saf’ir, by which time Abu Ja’far had proved himself to be the rightful Saf’ir of the Imam. Al...Tusi reports that Abu Ja’far arranged a secret meeting between al...Bilali and the Twelfth Imam to prove to him that he was acting on his behalf. Abu Ja’far took him to one of his houses where, it is said, they met the Imam, who ordered al...Bilali to hand the money over to Abu Ja’far (۳).

Al Tusi's report reveals that al...Bilali's importance in the organization was such that Abu Ja’far had to arrange this secret meeting with the Imam in Baghdad to put an end to the doubts raised by al...Bilali, doubts which had led to a split among the agents. According to al Tusi, shortly after this meeting Abu Ja’far went to al...Bilali's house, where his

.al-Kafi I, ٣٢٨; Kama'l, ٤٩٩ -١

.T. al-Ghayba, ٢۶٠ -٢

.T. al-Ghayba, ٢۶١ -٣

close supporters like Ibn Hirz and Abu al_Tayyib were assembled. Abu Ja'far asked ,al_Bilali

O Abu Tahir (al_Bilali), I ask you by Allah, did the Sahib al-Zaman (the Twelfth Imam), " peace be upon him, not command you to hand the money (of the Imam) which you (have over to me?" Al_Bilali replied, "Yes." Then Abu Ja'far left the house.(١

It is clear from this report that by these two steps Abu Ja'far managed to refute al_Bilali's claim. Al_Tusi mentioned one person who abandoned his support of al_Bilali and took Abu Ja'far's side, and perhaps other supporters did likewise, because the existent sources do not refer to any trace of this split during the last years of the .second Saf'ir's time in office, a fact which probably indicates that it had ended

C) Muhammad b. Nusayr

A third rival to Abu Ja'far for the office of the sifara was Muhammad b. Nusayr, who was not an ordinary Imamite, but belonged to the extremists, (al-Ghulat). It has been noted that some of the extremists, first during the time of the ninth Imam (such as Ja'far b. Waqid, Abu al_Ghamr and Hashim b. Abi Hashim), then during the time of the tenth and eleventh Imams (such as 'Ali b. Haska al_Hawwari al_Qummi and his students al_Qasim al_Sharani alYaqtini, al_Hasan b. Muhammad b. Baba al_Qummi and Muhammad b. Musa al_Shariqi or al_Shari'i), had claimed that they were the agents or the Gates (Abwab) of the Imam and had collected money from the ordinary believers. They also preached extremist ideas aimed at

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.T. al-Ghayba, ٢۶١ -١

.abolishing the Islamic rites, that is, the prayer, fast, zakat and pilgrimage

According to Al-Kashshi their roots lay in the extremist doctrines of Ibn Abi al…Khattab(١), the contemporary of the sixth Imam al-Sadiq. However, the presence of the Imams had limited the activities of the extremists, since the Imams used to have direct contacts with their followers and circulated open letters of excommunication against false agents.

But the occultation of the Twelfth Imam enabled the Ghulat to extend their role as agents or Gates (Abwab) at the expense of the Saf'ir, since the Saf'ir could not refute their claim by declaring publicly that he was the true Imam's Saf'ir, a declaration which might put his life and the Imam's life in danger. For this reason, when al…'Askari died, Muhammad b. Musa al…Shari'i claimed … as has been noted … that he was the Gate (Bab) of the Imam.

According to al…Tusi, after the death of al-Shari'i, Muhammad b. Nusayr al…Numayri aspired to the office of the Saf'ir(٢).

This shows that both men may have been representatives of a single trend. According to Al-Kashshi, Ibn Nusayr had already claimed that he was the Bab of the tenth Imam(٣). Al…Tusi's account suggests that he had abandoned this claim during the lifetime of the eleventh Imam, al…'Askari. It seems that only after the death of the first Saf'ir did he dispute the legality of Abu Ja'far as the Saf'ir and claim that he was the Bab of the Twelfth Imam.

Therefore Abu Ja'far cursed and

١- Ikhtiyar, ٥١٧-٢١, ٥٢٨-٩.

٢- T. al-Ghayba, ٢٥٩. Javad Ali and Rajkowski think that Ibn Nusayr was an eminent citizen of Basra. Moreover the latter thinks that he was of Persian origin. However, both base their accounts on al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (al-Khatib, III, ١۶٣-۴) and Al-Kashshi, whereas the latter refers to two people bearing the same name. The first one was his teacher in Basra and the second was the above extremist. Al-Kashshi attributed the latter lineage to the Arab tribe Fahr and criticized him bitterly; Ikhtiyar,

.۵, ۲۷۸, ۵۰۳, ۵۲۰

.Ikhtiyar, ۵۲۰-۱ -۳

excommunciated him. Having been excommunicated, Ibn Nusayr tried to make Abu Ja'far change his mind, but he did not even receive him, so the Imamites excluded him .(from their community(۱

Ibn Nusayr was encouraged in his claim by Muhammad b. Musa b. Furat, who .(belonged to the well…known family of Banu Furat(۲

He was a well…known muhaddith in Kufa and Baghdad and seems to have been the first man from Banu Furat to hold an important administrative office in the 'Abbasid .(government(۳

With the support of Banu Furat, Ibn Nusayr was able to circulate his claim amongst the Imamites, and, because of the participation of the two of them, their sect was known as "al…Numayriyya al…Furatiyya"(۴). The vast majority of their followers who came from Mada'in, and were called al…Ishaqiyya after one of their leaders, Ishaq b. .(Muhammad al-Ahmar(۵

It appears that Ibn Nusayr's claims neither weakened Abu Jafar's position nor attracted any of his followers to Ibn Nusayr's side, so the latter's influence must have .been limited mainly to the extremists

According to al…Nawbakhti a certain Ahmad was supposed to have been designated as the successor of Ibn Nusayr, but a Nusayri work refers to a certain Muhammad b. Jundab as Ibn Nusayr's successor in the view of the majority of the Nusayriyya. It is .(said that he was in turn followed by Muhammad al…Junbulani(۶

But this occurred at a later stage after the death of the second Saf'ir in ۳۰۵/۹۱۷, so it is beyond the topic of this section. However, it

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.T. al-Ghayba, ۲۵۹ -۱

N. Furat, ٧٨. Al-Sabi reports that Banu Furat used to inhabit a village called Babili -٢ Sasfrin in the district of upper Nahrawan, and that there were more than ٣٠٠ people in this village (Hilal b. Muhsin al-Sabi, al-Wizara [Cairo, ١٩٥٨], ١١١٢). They named themselves after their great-grandfather, Furat b. Ahnaf al-'Abdi, who had lived and died in Kufa around ١٢٠/٧٣٧ and was a close associate of al-Sajjad and al-Baqir (al-Barqi, al-Rijal, ٨-٩, ١۶). Another member of this family was 'Umar b. Furat, who was executed on the orders of Ibrahim b. al-Mahdi in ٢٠٣/٨٠٨, as a punishment inflicted on him for his propaganda in favour of the vizier Ibn Sahl. See for details, D. Sourdel, "Ibn .al-Furat", E.I. ٢; Rajkowski, op. cit., ٧۶٩-٧٠

.al-Khatib, III, ١۶٣-۴; al-Sabi, op. cit., ٣٠-٣١ -٣

.Rajkowski, op. cit., ٧٧٢-٣, quoted from al-Khasibi, Diwan, f. ۴٩b, ۴, ۵a -۴

al-Khatib, VI, ٣٨٠; Salih Ahmad al-'Ali, "al-Mada'in fi al-Masadir al-'Arabiyya", - ۵ .Sumar, XIII (١٩۶٧), ۵٠

.Javad Ali, op. cit., in Der Islam, XXV (١٩٣٩), ٢٠۶ -۶

is worth mentioning that, from the time of second Saf'ir onwards, the followers of Ibn Nusayr separated themselves totally from the direct control of the second Saf'ir, Abu Ja'far, who in the Imamite view was the only representative of the hidden Imam. Moreover the Nusayriyya gave more importance to the role of the Bab than to the Imam himself, which was proof enough to place them outside the circle of the .Twelver Imamites

The Activities of Abu Jafar, the Second Saf'ir .٢

A) The Career of Abu Ja'far

Despite the difficulties faced by Abu Ja'far because of the false agents Ibn Hilal, al..Bilali and Ibn Nusayr, he continued to direct the underground activities of the organization, extending its role amongst the Imamites. At the same time he followed in the first Saf'ir's footsteps by trying to prove the existence of the concealed Imam to the reliable Imamites. He sought to circulate amongst them the idea that the Imam's occultation had taken place because of divine intervention, that it was a vindication of the traditions related by the previous Imams, and that he, Abu Ja'far, was the rightful

.(Saf'ir of the hidden Imam(١

Furthermore, he sought to make it posssible to continue his duties without being harassed by his encouraging the belief of the authorities, originally fostered by the first Saf'ir, that al 'Askari had died without leaving a successor." He hoped that the government would therefore relax, content in the belief that an uprising was unlikely, .because the Imamites no longer had an Imam to rally and lead them

The dual plan of Abu Ja'far as regards

.T. al-Ghayba, ٢٣٣-۴ -١

the existence of the hidden Imam can be seen in several narrations. At one time, a certain Hamdan al_Qalansi asked Abu Ja'far about al-'Askari's successor. Abu Ja'far replied, "Al_'Askari has died, but he has left amongst you a successor whose neck is like this"(١), and he indicated the size of his neck as a sign that al_'Askaris son had .attained maturity

According to al_Saduq, Abu Ja'far made the same statement to the well_known scholar 'Abd Allah b. Ja'far al_Himyari, when the latter asked him about al_'Askari's :sons(٢). Furthermore on another occasion Abu Ja'far informed him as follows

The Sahib al_Amr (the Imam) attends the pilgrimage every year and sees the people" and knows them, while they see him but do not recognise him." He added that he had seen the Imam at al_Ka'ba holding its drapes and praying, "O Allah, avenge me (against my enemies."(٣

However, despite the fact that Abu Ja'far revealed the existence of the Twelfth Imam to al_Himyari, he warned him against trying to discover his name. The authorities were content that al_'Askari had died without leaving a successor(۴), but if they were to come to know the name of the Imam and his whereabouts, they would search for him and endanger both his life and the life of his agents(۵). Other reports indicate that

.the second Saf'ir instructed other agents similarly

A careful study of the activities of the agents reveals that the second Saf'ir managed in fact to keep the existence of the hidden Imam secret from the

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۱- al-Kafi, I, ۳۲۹, ۳۳۱.

۲- Kama'l, ۴۳۵.

۳- Kama'l, ۴۴۰.

۴- Kama'l, ۴۴۲..

۵- al-Kafi, I, ۳۳۰.

.(Abbasids until the early years of the reign of al_Mu'tadid (۲۷۸_۸۹/۸۹۱_۹۰۱'

Perhaps this was due to the wise instructions issued to his agents by Abu Ja'far who, as a part of his prudent fear (Taqiyya), carried out his activities unnoticed and in secret. Like his father before him he disguised himself as a butter_seller and acquired .(the nickname al_Samman(۱

He used pseudonyms in his underground meetings with some of his agents. According to al_Kashshi, Abu Ja'far's name was Muhammad b. Hafs al_'Umari(۲), whereas his real name was Muhammad b. 'Uthman b. Sa'id, and it might be that the first name was .a pseudonym

Furthermore a careful study of the chain of transmitters (asanid) of the Prophetic traditions and the sayings of the Imams shows that there is no reference to his name as a narrator, whereas most of the Tawqi'at (written and signed answers or pronouncements) attributed to the eleventh and Twelfth Imams concerning legal .(matters came on the authority of Abu Ja'far(۳

This fact reveals that he did not wish to implicate himself in any open discussions of religious matters, so that he could hide. his real position amongst the Imamites from the government and convey communications between the hidden Imam and his

.followers, free from the interference of the authorities

B) The Agents of the Second Saf'ir in Baghdad

It has been noted that the first Saf'ir had three agents in Baghdad, Ahmad b. Ishaq, Muhammad b. Ahmad al_Qattan, and Hajiz al Washsha'. It appears that the responsibilities of the second Saf'ir, Abu Ja'far, were greater than that

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۱- Abu al-Fida, op, cit., II, ۶۹; al-Kamil, VIII, ۸۰; T. al-Ghayba, ۱۹۲.

۲- Ikhtiyar, ۵۳۲.

۳- al-Tabarsi, al-Ihtijaj, II, ۲۹۷-۳۰۱.

of the first, since according to al_Tusi he had ten people beneath him in Baghdad. to run the affairs of the organization.

Amongst them was al_Husayn b. Ruh al_Nawbakhti, who later became the third Saf'ir.(۱) Al_Tusi does not name the other agents, but it is most likely that the three agents of the first Saf'ir were amongst them, since these three served the organization in Baghdad during the time of the second Saf'ir, who had direct contact with them(۲).

Al_Qattan was the most active amongst the agents in Baghdad. According to al_Saduq, he had seen the Imam(۳). Al-Kashshi describes his reliability when he relates that, "After Abu Ja'far, there was no one on earth closer to the origin (the Imam) than he" (۴), because he used to be the direct mediator between the Imam and the Imamites via the second Saf'ir, although the Imamites had no knowledge whatsoever of his relationship with Abu Ja'far.

Perhaps for this reason a certain agent called al_Hasan b. al_Fadl, who used to deal with al_Qattan concerning legal affairs, thought that he was the Saf'ir.(۵)

The available sources make it rather difficult to detect the names of the rest of the agents in Baghdad, particularly if one bears in mind the fact that Abu Ja'far continued

in his office for about fifty years. It is therefore probable that some of the agents, like Ahmad b. Ishaq, al-Qattan and Hajiz, had died and been replaced by other agents. Ibn Rustam al_Tabari reports that Ahmad b. Ishaq died in

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.T. al-Ghayba, ٢۴٠ -١

Concerning the activities of al-Qattan, see al-Kafi, ۵٢٠; T. al-Ghayba, ١٩٠-١; Bihar, -٢ LI, ٣٠٢, ٢١٧; Kama'l, ۴٠٩-١; al-Irshad, ٣٩٨-٩. For Hajiz's relations with the Saf'ir, see Bihar, LI, ٢٩۴, and for Ahmad b. Ishaq's contacts with the Saf'ir and other agents, see .Dala'il, ٢٧٢; Ikhtiyar, ۵۵۶-٧

.Kama'l, ۴۴٢ -٣

.Ikhtiyar, ۵٣۵ -۴

.al-Irshad, ٣٩٩ -۵

.(Hilwan on his way to Qumm, but he does not fix the date of his death(١

According to al_Saduq, when Hajiz died his office was filled by Muhammad b. Ja'far al_Asadi al_Razi(٢). Al_Qattan seems to have continued his activities after the years ٢٧٩_٢٨٢/٨٩١_٨٩۴, when the government tried to arrest him after discovering the existence of the Twelfth Imam(٣). He also carried out his activities during al_Mu'tadid's regime (٢٧٩٢٨٩/٨٩١_٩٠١),(۴) but there is no reference to him after that .period, which may indicate that he died around that date

Al_Tusi gives several accounts of the last will of the second Saf'ir in ٣٠۵/٩١٧ which :includes the names of the eminent agents at that time. He reports

During Abu Ja'far's last illness, the heads of the Shi'a congregated around him." Among them were Abu 'Ali b. Humam, Abu 'Abd Allah b. Muhammad al_Kdtib, Abu 'Abd Allah al_Baqtani, Abu Sahl Isma'il b. 'Ali al_Nawbakhti, Abu 'Abd Allah al_Wajna, and "?other leaders. They asked him, "If something happens to you, who will succeed you

He said to them, "This is Abu al_Qasim al_Husayn b. Ruh b. Abi Bahr alNawbakhti. He will be in charge of my office and will be the safar between you and the Sahib al_Amr

(the Imam), because he is his agent and is honest and trustworthy. So consult him in your matters, and depend on him in your needs, because I was ordered to announce (this proclamation."(5)

According to another narration Ibn Ruh and Ahmad b. Ja'far b. Matil were amongst those who attended

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1- Dala'il, ۲۷۲ According to al-Sadnq, Ahmad b. Ish'aq died in Hilwan before ۲۶۰/۸۷۴, but this cannot be accepted because there are several indications that he outlived al-'Askari (d. ۲۶۰/۸۷۴). Moreover al-Saduq relates his report on the authority of Muhammad b. Bahr, who was well-known for fabricating narrations; Kama'l, ۴۵۴, ۴۶۶-۷; al-Najashi, ۲۹۸.

2- Kama'l, ۴۸۸.

3- al-Kafi, I, ۵۲۵.

4- T. al-Ghayba, ۱۹۱-۲.

5- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۴۲.

this meeting. The agents thought that, in the case of the death of the second Saf'ir, either Ja'far b. Ahmad b. Matil or his father would succeed him, because of their close relations with him(1).

These two reports disclose the names of the chief agents of Baghdad around the year ۳۰۴-۵/۹۱۶-۷ and the fact that the agents Ahmad b. Ishaq, Hajiz and al-Qattan, who had been in office in Baghdad from the time of the first Saf'ir, had died, as has already been mentioned. Likewise they show that some of the other agents from the time of the first Saf'ir were still living and had been promoted to high ranks, like al-Baqtani and al-Wajna (2).

C) The Relationship of the Second Saf'ir to the Agents in the other Provinces

Apart from his agents in Baghdad, Abu Ja'far had other agents in various provinces, who were mediators between the provincial Imamites and the Twelfth Imam in legal

.inquiries and the collecting of the khums

He had three principal agents in Iraq. His agent in Kufa was Ahmad b. Muhammad al…Zajawzji, whose family had controlled this office since the time of the first Saf'ir (and who was to hold this office during the time of the third Saf'ir.(۳

According to al…Tusi and al-Najashi, the Twelfth Imam also had contacts in Kufa with two people from the family of Zurara: Muhammad b. Sulayman (۲۳۷…۳۰۰/۸۵۱ ۹۱۲),(۴) and (his uncle 'Ali b. Sulayman, who died around the year ۳۱۳/۹۲۵.(۵

It seems that they were in fact cooperating with al-Zajawzji and were working under his instruction in their areas. The family of

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.T. al-Ghayba, ۲۴۰- ۲۴۱ -۱

According to Ibn Rustam, after the death of al-'Askari in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴, al-Baqtani claimed -۲ that he was the agent of the twelfth Imam (Bihar, LI, ۳۰۰). But later he appears to have abandoned his claim and served both the second and third Saf'irs (T. al-Ghayba, ۲۴۲). Al-Wajna' was amongst those who had seen the Imam (Kama'l, ۴۴۳). He was resident in Baghdad during the time of the second Saf'ir (al-Kaf, I, ۵۲۱). However it appears that he had some relations with the political bases of the Imamites in Mosul .in ۳۰۷/۹۱۹; T. al-Ghayba, ۲۰۵

.T. al-Ghayba, ۱۹۸ -۳

.T. al-Ghayba, ۱۹۳, ۱۹۵ -۴

.al-Najashi, ۱۹۸; Buzurg, Nawabigh al-Ruwat, ۱۸۶ -۵

Zurara had been well…known for their allegiance to the Imams from the time of their great…grandfather Zurara b. A'yun (d. ۱۵۰/۷۶۷), the companion of the Imams al…Baqir .(and al…Sadiq(۱

His grandson Sulayman had been the agent of the tenth Imam, al…Hadi, both in Kufa and Baghdad. Furthermore, Ahmad, the son of Muhammad b. Sulayman, worked during the time of the third Saf'ir under Ahmad al…Zajawzji(۲), which indicates the

.close relationship between the latter and the family of Zurara

In al_Ahwaz the deputyship of the Imam was still in the hands of Muhammad b. Ibrahim al_Mahzayar. It is said that he received an order from the Imam to follow the (instructions of the second Saf'ir.(٣

According to al_Saduq one member of this family, Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Mahzayar, doubted the existence of the Twelfth Imam. His case was raised with the Imam, who issued a letter in which he confirmed that Allah would remove his doubt and lead him .(to recover his faith (۴

The second Saf'ir extended his activities to new areas. According to al_Saduq his main agents in Wasit were Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah al Ha'iri and al_Hasan b. Muhammad b. Qatat al_Saydalani. The latter was the Imam's agent for endowments (wakil al_waqf) .(in Wasit, and was contacted by the Saf'ir through Ja'far b. Muhammad b. Matil(۵

Al_Mawsil was another area in which the second Saf'ir gained partisans, and al_Tusi mentions a certain Muhammad b. al_Fadl al Mawsili, who had accepted Abu Ja'far as the Saf'ir of the Imam(۶). Abu Ja'far

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۱- N. al-Ghayba, ۱۷۹; Mizan, II, ۶۹-۷۰, ۳۹۹; Buzurg, Nawabigh al-Ruwat, ۵۳-۵۵, ۱۶۱-۳; al-Najashi, ۱۳۲-۳.

۲- al-Khirsan, Sharh Mashyakhat TahdhTb al-Ahkam (Najaf, ۱۹۶۳), ۱۳-۱۶.

۳- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۳۵.

۴- Kama'l, ۴۸۵.

۵- Kama'l, ۵۰۴.

۶- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۰۵-۶.

himself succeeded in attracting some influential people to his side in that area. Al_Irbili reports that al_Husayn b. Hamdan (from the famous ruling family, the Hamdanids) .became the governor of Qumm in ۲۹۶/۹۰۸

After he had been dismissed from his office, he contacted the second Saf'ir in Baghdad. He paid him the khums on all the money he had earned while in office as a sign of his obedience to the Twelfth Imam. As a result of his belief, the rest of his family also converted to the Imamite doctrine(١).

In Samarra the agent was Abu al_Qasim al_Hasan b. Ahmad. According to al_Saduq, he had direct contact with both the second Saf'ir and the Imam(٢).

Meanwhile all the affairs of the Imamites' institutions in Iran were controlled by the agent of Rayy, Muhammad b. Ja'far b. Muhammad al_Asadi al_Razi. He had direct contact with the second Saf'ir and previously he had been answerable only to the first Saf'ir. The other agents of the Iranian provinces were instructed to pay the legal taxes to him.

He continued in this office until his death in ٣١٢/٩٢۴.(٣) According to al_Tusi, at this time al_Qasim b. al 'Ala was the agent of the second Saf'ir in Azerbayjan. He continued in his office until the time of the third Saf'ir, Ibn Ruh(۴).

The second Saf'ir carried out extensive secret activities with his agents, whom he used to meet in various districts of Baghdad. During the period of the caliph al_Mu'tadid (٢٧٩_٢٨٩/٨٩٢_٩٠١) the agents from the remote provinces

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١ - al-Irbili, Kashf al-Ghumma, IV, ۴٠٩; Bihar, LI, ۵۶-٧; al-Irbili does not mention the year in which Ibn Hamdan controlled Qumm; however, Ibn al-Athir reports that he was installed in this post in ٢٩۶/٩٠٨. Consequently the contact between the second Saf'ir and Ibn Hamdan must have occurred after that date; al-Kamil, VIII, ١۴, ٣٢.

٢ - Kama'l, ۴٩٣, ۴٩۵.

٣ - Kama'l, ۴٨٨, ۴٨۶; Bihar, LI, ٢٩۴, ٣٢۵.

۴ - T. al-Ghayba, ٢٠٢.

like Qumm used to contact the second Saf'ir and convey money and goods to him through traders who had no knowledge of the relationship between those who sent

the goods and Abu Ja'far as the second Saf'ir. On the contrary they brought these goods from Qumm to Abu Ja'far thinking that he was involved with the traders only commercially(١).

In his relations with his agents Abu Ja'far was careful to leave no trace which the authorities could use against him and which would jeopardise both his own life and that of the Imam. Al-Saduq reports a secret meeting between Abu Ja'far and Ibn Matil, one of the ten agents in Baghdad. Abu Ja'far took Ibn Matil to a ruin in al'Abbasiyya in Baghdad,(٢) where he read a letter written to him by the Twelfth Imam and then tore it to pieces(٣).

To evade any government spies Abu Ja' far also did not implicate himself in any direct contact with agents from remote provinces. He used to order any person who brought letters or money to put them in a certain place, and he would give him no receipt(۴).

Another narration indicates that the second Saf'ir had established a complicated system of communications between himself and the agents in the Imamite areas. There seems to have been a secret code reserved for the Saf'ir and his agents, while the messengers were sometimes ignorant of both the contents of their messages and the code. For example, Abu Ja'far once sent messages to Samarra

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١- T. al-Ghayba, ١٩٢- ١٩٣.

٢- Al-'Abbasiyya was a fief in Baghdad granted to al-'Abbas, the brother of the caliph al-Mansur. According to al-Khatib al-Baghdadi there were two fiefs of the same name, one on the eastern side of Baghdad and the other on the western side. Because the house of Abu Ja'far was on the western side, the meeting may have occurred there; al-Khatib, I, ٧٩, ٩۵.

٣- Kama'l, ۴٩٨.

۴- T. al-Ghayba, ١٩٢.

with one of his reliable partisans, but the messenger inserted a letter amongst the

other messages without the Saf'ir's knowledge. In Samarra he received answers to all the letters except his own(1).

The second Saf'ir sometimes dealt directly with certain agents with whom he had previously communicated indirectly. The career of Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Aswad is a good example of such a case. According to al-Saduq, al-Aswad used to bring the legal taxes for the Imam to Abu Ja'far, who commanded him to hand them over to the well-known scholar al-'Abbas b. Ma'ruf al-Qummi(2), and did not offer him any receipt(3).

However, we later find al-Aswad dealing directly with the second Saf'ir and the third Saf'ir, who both received in person the money which al-Aswad had collected from the Imamites(4).

3. The Effect of the Shiite Revolutionary Activities upon the 'Abbasids' Attitude towards the Twelfth Imam

3.1) The events of the second Saf'ir's career suggest that he instructed his agents to avoid any act which might lead the government of the day to think that the Imamites still had political aspirations or that they had an Imam leading them secretly. Despite the fact that he directed the Imamites to maintain this policy, the political activities of the other Shiite groups, particularly the Zaydites, the Qaramita and the Isma'ilis, complicated the Imamites' relations with the 'Abbasids and made it difficult for them to keep the existence of the Twelfth Imam totally concealed from their opponents.

When the Zanj revolution (255-270/866-883) was taking place the situation of the Imamites was critical. The leader of that revolution, 'Ali b. Muhammad,

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1- Kama'l, 499.

2- Al-'Abbas b. Ma'ruf was a companion to the tenth Imam, al-Hadi. He devoted his time during the short occultation to relating Imamite narrations; therefore, perhaps, Abu Ja'far originally ordered al-Aswad to hand the money over to Ibn Ma'ruf because

al-Aswad, at that time, was not aware of the necessity of the underground organization. For a full account of the career of Ibn Ma'ruf as a narrator of Imamite narrations which criticise those Shiites who considered Ibn al-Hanafiyya or the seventh Imam Musa al-Kazim, as the hidden Imam, see Ikhtiyar, ۳۱۵, ۴۶۱; al-Najashi, ۲۱۵-۶, ۱۵۱; al-Tusi, Tahdhib al-Ahkam, IV, ۱۲۲, ۱۳۷, V, ۲۹۲, VI, ۱۲۲, ۱۹۴.

۳- Kama'l, ۵۰۲.

۴- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۴۱.

traced his lineage to the brother of Imam al-Baqir, Zayd b. 'Ali. For this reason a considerable group of 'Alids joined his side and participated in his uprising from the year ۲۵۷/۸۷۱.(۱)

In spite of the fact that the eleventh Imam, al-'Askari, had openly announced that the leader of the Zanj was not a member of the People of the House (Ahl al-Bayt),(۲) the authorities considered this revolution to be linked with the 'Alids. According to al-Tabari, the collapse of the Zanj revolt in ۲۷۰/۸۸۳ was followed by governmental propaganda against the 'Alids in general. This attitude can be discerned in the poem of Yahya b. Muhammad al-Aslami, who praised the 'Abbasid leader al-Muwaffaq in ۲۷۰/۸۸۳ with this verse:

ویتلی کتاب الله فی کل مسجد * ویلقی دعاء الطالبین خاسیا

And the Book of Allah is recited in every mosque, and the Talibiyyin invite people to their cause in vain.(۳)

It is most likely that the 'Abbasid antagonism towards extreme Shi'ite groups extended also to the Imamites. According to al-Tusi, the Imamites were too frightened to express their doctrine openly between the years ۲۷۰-۲۷۳/۸۸۳-۸۸۷.(۴)

Another factor which strained relations between the Imamites and the 'Abbdsids was the discovery of the underground activities of the two Isma'ill parties, the original Isma'lis and the Qaramita(۵). Like the Imamites, the Isma'ilis had reported the Prophetic traditions stating that al-Qa'im al-Mahdi would go into occultation as a preparatory action for his rising.(۶)

However, they interpreted some of these traditions in a manner which would support their struggle

p: ۱۷۰

Tabari, III, ۱۸۵۷, ۲۰۲۴, ۲۱۰۹; for a full account of the Zanj revolt see the two important -۱ articles by Naji, "Tarikh al-Tabari Masdaran ‘an Thawrat al-Zanj", al-Mawrid VII, No. ۲ (۱۹۷۸), ۳۷-۹۲; and "al-Tanzim al-’Askari li jaysh Sahib al Zanj", al-Mu’arikh al-’Arabi, VII .((۱۹۷۸), ۱۱۶-۱۵۷; Faysal al-Samir, Thawrat al Zanj (Basra, ۱۹۵۲

.al-Irbili, Kashf al-Ghumma, IV, ۴۲۸; Bihar, L, ۲۹۳ -۲

al-Tabari, Tareekh, ۸ vols., (Beirut, Mu'assasah al-`Alami lil-Matboo`aat, ۴th ed., -۳ ۱۴۰۳), vol. ۸, pg. ۱۴۵

Al-Tusi reports that the tomb of al-Husayn collapsed in ۲۷۳/۸۸۶ probably due to an -۴ act of sabotage, especially if one bears in mind the fact that an attack upon the grave .of ‘Ali was foiled about the same time; al-Tusi, Tahdhib al-Ahkam, VI, ۱۱۱-۱۲

For the distinction between the Mubarakiyya and the Qaramita, see Q. Maqalat, ۸۰- -۵ .۶; N. Firaq, ۶۷-۷۴; al-Fusul al-Mukhtara, ۲۴۷-۸

T. al-Ghayba, ۳۹, ۱۳۰. The Isma'ili writer Ibn Hawshab narrates in al-Kashf several -۶ Qur'anic verses about the Last Day, which for him means the rise of al-Qa’im al-Mahdi (al-Kashf ۵-۶, ۱۰, ۱۱, ۱۴, ۲۴; Abu Ya’qub al-Sijistani, Kashf al- Mahjub (Teheran, ۱۹۴۹, ۸۱-۳). Moreover, Ibn Hawshab mentions a narration attributed to al-Sadiq, stating that al-Qa’im will rise in Mecca. Thus he agrees with the Imamite reports .regarding this point; al-Kashf ۳۲-۵

to gain immediate success in North Africa (al…Maghrib). Thus they understood the tradition which states that al-Qa’im al…Mahdi will appear when the sun rises from the .(place of its setting to mean that the Qa'im would rise in the west (al…Maghrib)(۱

Furthermore they applied other traditions narrated by the Imamites about al-Qa’im al-Mahdi to their own concealed leader, who had organized his followers into a strong underground movement and had commanded them to extend their activities into new .(areas by military means to prepare for his rising as al-Qa’im al…Mahdi(۲

According to Sa'd al_Ash'ari the number of the Qaramita increased in the villages around Kufa, and according to al_Nawbakhti, they gained about ۱۰۰,۰۰۰ partisans .(there(۳

Afterwards they expanded their propaganda on the western shores of the Gulf and Yemen, where a large number of Arabs accepted their cause, thus helping them to become powerful. As a result of all this they announced their rebellion(۴), which (according to al_Tabari occurred in the suburbs of Kufa in ۲۷۸/۸۹۱.(۵

In the occultation of the Twelfth Imam the Isma'ilis seem to have found a good opportunity to use the Imamite masses in their political struggle. According to Ibn al_Athir, the Qaramita missionary Yahya b. al_Mahdi went to Bahrain, which had a large Shi ite population. In ۲۸۱/۸۹۴ he contacted an eminent Shiite leader, 'Ali b. al_Mu'alla b. Hamdan, and informed him that he had been sent by al_Mahdi to inform .his followers that his rising was at hand

Ali b. al_Mu'alla was satisfied with the'

Ibn Hawshab, Asrar al-Nutaqa', ۵۱-۳, ۹۰-۲. For the details of the Isma'ili use of these -۱ traditions in their activities with the tribe of Kitama in ۲۸۰/۸۹۳, see al-Kamil, VIII, ۲۴-۵, .۲۶

Ibn Hawshab, al-Kashf ۶۲; al-Kamil, VIII, ۲۲-۳; Ivanow supports this point in - ۲ suggesting that "the terrible slaughter of the pilgrims in the Ka'ba itself, and the seizure of the sacred relics were not acts of wanton cruelty, but were connected with some expectations of a religious character, such as the return of Muhammad b. Isma'il in full glory, etc., which most probably was expected to be due about that time." Ivanow, "Ismailis and Qarmatians", Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal .Asiatic Society, XVI (۱۹۴۰), ۸۲; also see W. Madelung, "Karmati", E.I.۲

.N. Firaq, ۷۶; al-Tabari confirms this number; Tabari, II, ۲۲۱۸ -۳

.Q. Maqalat, ۸۶ -۴

.Tabari, III, ۲۱۲۴ -۵

message and revealed it to the Shiites in the town of Qatif and other villages of Bahrain. They in turn accepted it and promised that they too would support al‑Mahdi if he rose. By such means the Qaramita succeeded in circulating their propaganda among the Arab tribe of Qays and began to collect the khums.(۱)

By using the same methods, they expanded their activities among the tribes of Asad, Tayy and Tamim in the Sawad; while in the desert of the Samawa, the tribe of Banu al‑'Ulays, which used to protect the trade route between Kufa and Damascus, also joined their side(۲).

It is worth mentioning that the Qaramita took into consideration the sectarian beliefs and economic situation of the people with whom they worked. Therefore we find that their propaganda spread mainly among people who already had Shiite inclinations, such as the Qarmatiyyun, who had participated in the Zanj revolt(۳), and also among the people of the Sawad(۴), who wished to join the side of any rebel in order to improve their social and economic conditions.

There is evidence that the Qaramita permitted their followers to kill their opponents and confiscate their property(۵).

The Imamites seem to have been aware of the danger of such a principle, since the 'Abbasid government might accuse them of holding the same principle and it could be easy for it to attack them under this pretext.

Since both the Qaramita and the Imamites were Shiites and lived in the same areas, practicing

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۱ - al‑Kamil, VII, ۳۴۰‑۱, VIII, ۲۱‑۲. There is evidence which encourages the present writer to link the activities of the Qaramita with those of the Ismailis. Ibn Hawqal mentions that after the establishment of the Qaramita state in Bahrain they used to send the khums to the Sahib al‑Zaman, that is the Ismaili leader in Egypt; Ibn Hawqal,

.op. cit., ۲۱-۳

.Tabari, III, ۲۲۱۸; Ibn Hawqal, op. cit., ۲۹ -۲

Tabari, III, ۱۷۵۷. Shaban put forward the theory that the Isma'ili movement in Iraq -۳ and Bahrain was called the Qaramita after a specific race called al-Qaramatiyyun. They came originally from Libya and they could hardly speak Arabic. They took part in the Zanj revolt and joined the Ismaili movement when the revolt collapsed. (Shaban, .(op. cit, ۱۳۰

.Tabari, III, ۲۲۰۲ -۴

.Maqalat, ۸۵ -۵

the same religious rites, expecting the rise of al-Qa'im al…Mahdi in the near future, it was difficult for the government to differentiate between them without extensive and .careful investigation

The Twelfth Imam wanted to protect his followers from the influence of the (۳.۲ Qaramita and make the government of the day differentiate between the Qaramita and his own adherents. Perhaps this is why he is said to have sent a letter to his second Saf'ir, in which he denounced and cursed Muhammad b. Abi Zaynab and his .(followers (the Qaramita

He declared that he had no relations with them and ordered his 'followers neither to have any discussion with them nor to attend their gatherings. The second Saf'ir circulated the pronouncement of the Imam among the Imamites via his agent Ishaq .(b. Ya'qub(۱

It seems most likely that the Imamites obeyed the instructions in the pronouncement. According to Ibn al…Athir, a group of people from Kufa revealed to the Abbasid authorities the underground activities of the Qaramita in their area and informed them that they were inventing rules contrary to Islamic law, according to which it was permissible to murder any Muslim other than those who paid them an oath of .allegiance

Ibn al…Athir also reports that later a group of Talibiyyun fought beside the .(government against the Qaramita in Kufa(۲

It is plausible that in both of these instances these groups were Imamites, and that these steps were part of their plan to make the ‘Abbasids realize in a practical way

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۱- Kama’l, ۴۸۳, ۴۸۵.

۲- al-Kamil, VIII, ۳۱۱, ۳۷۶.

that they were not responsible for the Qaramita's activities.

However, there is evidence that the ‘Abbasids paid no attention to the Imamite claims(۱). The period of al-Mu'tadid (۲۷۹-۲۸۹/۸۹۲-۹۰۱) was distinguished as one of oppression and pursuit for the Imamites. It was well known among the Sunni scholars like al-Ash’ari that the Imamites had achieved a consensus in respect of the prohibition of any militant revolution unless the Imam himself appeared and ordered them to such action(۲).

But the propaganda of the Qaramita concerning the rise of al-Qa’im al-Mahdi seems to have encouraged the government to link their activities with the occultation of the Twelfth Imam and to consider them as a preparation for his rising. They were certainly encouraged in this direction by the fact that the cousin of the Twelfth Imam, Muhsin b. Ja’far b. ‘Ali al-Hadi involved himself in the Qaramita's rebellion in Damascus(۳).

This critical situation gave the opponents of the Imamites a vital weapon, which the viziers used not only against the Imamites but also against their own colleagues who were anti-Shi’ite(۴). In ۲۷۸/۸۹۱ the caliph, al-Mu'tamid, ordered the arrest of a member of the Imamite family Banu Furat who had held the office of Diwan al-Sawad. The family members hid themselves, but Abu Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Furat was still arrested(۵).

In the same time al-Mu’tamid appointed ‘Ubayd Allah b. Sulayman, who was well-known for his anti-‘Alid attitude(۶), to the office of the wizara(۷). If one can link the uprising of the Qaramita in ۲۷۸/۸۹۱ with these

۱- Tabari, III, ۲۱۲۷-۸; al-Kamil, VII, ۳۱۱.

۲- al-Ash’ari, Maqalat al-Islamiyyin, ۵۸; Ibn Shadhan, al-Idah, ۴۷۵.

۳- Later in ۳۰۰/۹۱۲ Muhsin was arrested in the suburbs of Damascus. His head was sent to Baghdad, where it was impaled on a bridge in the eastern side of the city, an area which was inhabited by a large Shiite population; Maqatil, ۴۴۹; al-Kubaysi, op. cit., ۴۴۶.

۴- ‘Ali b. Isa, who was known for his anti ‘Alid attitude, was called a Qarmati by his personal enemies; as a result he was dismissed from office (‘Arib, op. cit., ۵۹). Al-Qasim al-Khaqani was discharged in the same manner. Later al-Hallaj was arrested on the accusation that he was a Qarmatian missionary; Nujum, III, ۱۸۲; Ibn Taymiyya, Aami' al-Rasa'il, I, ۱۸۸.

۵- al-Sabi, al-Wuzara, ۲۹۲-۳; Tabari, III, ۲۱۲۳.

۶- al-Kamil, VII, ۳۳۳.

۷- Tabari, III, ۲۱۲۳. ‘Ubayd Allah b. Sulayman was a close associate of al-Muwaffaq in Samaria in ۲۶۴/۸۷۸, but four years later he was imprisoned. When al-Mu’tadid became the heir-apparent to al-Mu’tamid, ‘Ubayd Allah was promoted to the office of the wizara, whereupon he used his office to pursue his rivals such as Bann Furat. At the same time he managed to uncover the activities of the agents of the second Saf’ir. He died in ۲۸۸/۹۰۰; al-Kafi, I, ۵۲۵; al-Kamil, VII, ۲۱۹, ۲۲۷, ۳۰۹; al-Fakhri, ۳۰۲.

two steps … taking into account the attitude of ‘Ubayd Allah b. Sulayman … one can claim that ‘Ubayd Allah's appointment was part of the precautions taken by the ‘Abbasids against Shiite activities in general.

Afterward, al…Mu’tadid carried out a careful investigation of Shiite underground cells in general. In ۲۸۲/۸۹۵ he discovered that Muhammad b. Zayd, the head of the Zaydite state in Tabaristan, was sending ۳۲,۰۰۰ dinars every year to Muhammad b. Ward al…‘Attar so that he could distribute the money among the ‘Alids in Baghdad, Kufa, Mecca and Medina(۱).

The continual investigations of al-Mutadid caused the arrest and murder of many ‘Alids; according to al…Isfahani they were not Qaramita, but were simply persecuted

.(under that pretext(٢

As a result of these measures, the authorities realized that the Imamites had their own organization. According to al…Kulayni the spies of the vizier ‘Ubayd Allah b. Sulayman discovered that the Imamites still had an Imam who guided their activities :secretly. Al-Kulayni reports

Al…Husayn b. al…Hasan al… ‘Alawi said that two intimates of Badr Hasani (the servant" of the caliph) were talking and one of them said, ‘Why, he (the Twelfth Imam) is collecting money and has agents, wukala’. Afterwards they named all the agents in all the districts. Then they reported this information to the vizier ‘Ubayd Allah b. .Sulayman, who endeavoured to arrest them

But the caliph (al…Mu’tadid) told him to search for the place of this man (the Imam), because this matter was important. ‘Ubayd Allah b. Sulaymdn said, ‘Let us arrest

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.Tabari, III, ٢١٤٨; al-Muntazam, V, ١٥٠ -١

Al-Isfahani mentions that two ‘Alids, Muhammad b. ‘Ali b. Ibiahim and ‘Ali b. - ٢ Muhammad b. ‘Ali, were tortured along with the Qarmati Sahib al-Kahl, whose hands and legs were cut off, yet they did not support the Qaramita nor did they have any relations with them (Maqatil, ۴۴۶). Al-Tabari states twice that the ‘Abbasid troops arrested a group of Qaramita in ٢٨۶/٨٩٩ and investigated them. They disclosed the name of their leader, Abu Hashim b. Sadaqa al-Katib, who was arrested and put in jail (Tabari III, ٢١٧٩). Al-Mu’tadid's investigation of the Qaramita leader, Abu al-Fawaris, shows that he differentiated between the doctrine of the Qaramita and the Imamites; al-Kamil, VII, ٣۵۴

the agents.' But the caliph said, ‘No, but infiltrate among them some spies who are unknown (in their service to the government), and ask them to give money to the (agents. Then arrest anyone who accepts the money."(١

Al…Kulayni does not mention the date of this incident, but we know that ‘Ubayd Allah b.

Sulayman continued in the service to the caliph al_Mu tadid until the year ۲۸۸/۹۰۰, so .this incident must have taken place between the years ۲۸۲_۲۸۸/۸۹۵_۹۰۰

It is clear from this report that the 'Abbasid spies had reached the conclusion that the eleventh Imam al_'Askari had in fact left a successor, who directed the underground activities of his agents; but they were unsure of his place of residence. So they tried to arrest some of his agents and partisans, hoping that by interrogating them they might also arrest the Twelfth Imam. For this reason, the caliph ordered that spies be sent .with money to infiltrate amongst the agents

However, it seems that the Saf'ir's network was so strong and worked so efficiently that his agents from near and far knew at once that the caliph and his vizier planned to act against them. Before the plan to arrest the agents of the Imam could be .executed an order to stop the collection of taxes had gone out to almost every agent

When a spy infiltrated as far as the main agent in Baghdad, Muhammad alQattan, and informed him that he had money and wanted to send it to the

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.al-Kafi, I, ۵۲۵ -۱

Imam, al_Qattan pretended that he knew nothing about this matter. The other agents .(acted similarly(۱

It appears that the caliph failed to obtain any information from his spies. Therefore he decided to try to gather information by arresting the Imamites who came to visit the tomb of al_Hir, where al_Husayn was buried, and the tombs of Quraysh, where the .seventh and the ninth Imams were buried

However, according to the Imamite sources, this plan was revealed to the Imamites, and an order was sent out to both the families of Banu Furat and al_Barsiyyin, (warning them not to visit the tombs of Quraysh in Baghdad."(۲

According to al_Rawandi, a report came to the caliph revealing that the Twelfth Imam

was staying in the house of his father in Sdmarra. The caliph did not want knowledge of his information to reach the hands of the Imamites, so he himself dispatched three .of his personal soldiers to Samarra

He described the house of al… ‘Askari to them and commanded them to enter it and kill whomever they found inside, but he did not reveal to them the name of the person whom they were going to murder. However, the Twelfth Imam managed to evade the .(soldiers, and they returned to the capital(٣

The hostile 'Abbasid attitude towards the agents of the second Saf’ir continued after ‘Ubayd Allah b. Sulayman's death in ٢٨٨/٩٠٠. His office was given to his son al…Qasim. The latter was well…known in his hatred toward the Imamites and the Shiites in .general

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.al-Kafi, I, ٥٢٥ -١

al-Kafi, I, ٥٢٥; al-Irshad, ۴٠٢; T. al-Ghayba, ١٨٣-۴. This order is believed to have -٢ .come from the Imam himself

al-Rawandi, al-Khara'ij wa-l-Jara'ih (Bombay, ١٣٠١), ۶٧. Al-Tusi mentions the names -٣ of two of the three soldiers: Ahmad b. ‘Abd Allah and Rashiq, the servant of al-Mu’tadid. It appears that al-Tusi's report is sound, because al-Tabari confirms that Rashiq was the personal soldier (ghulam, khadim) of al-Mu’tadid and took part in the fighting against the Zanj revolution; Tabari III, ١٩٥٣, ٢٠٠٣, ٢٠٠٧, ٢٠١٧-٩, ٢٠٨٢-٣; T. al-.Ghayba, ١۶٠-١

Throughout his service in office he followed the same policies of his father towards .the Imamites and showed more malevolence

Al…Tusi gives a report supporting this point: Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allah of Qumm, who had seen the Imam and had obvious Imamite inclinations, attracted the attention of the vizier al…Qasim b. ‘Ubayd Allah. On several occasions he tried to murder him, so he .(finally fled to Egypt(١

According to Ibn al_Jawzi, al_Qasim arrested many innocent ‘Alids on the pretext that (they had Qarmatian inclinations, and they remained in jail until ۲۹۱/۹۰۳.(۲

The continual campaigns of arrest carried out by the ‘Abbasids and the ill_effects of the Qaramita uprisings made the Imam and his agents even more careful. According to Abu Sahl al_Nawbakhti the correspondence between the Imam and the Saf’ir stopped about this time(۳), probably in order to erase any traces which might lead the .authorities to them

As another precautionary measure from the reign of al_Mu'tadid onwards the Imam changed his place of residence several times. Reports mentioned by al_Tusi indicate that, in an unspecified year, a certain agent told Abu Sawra that he was going to the Maghrib to meet the Imam. Someone else saw him in Syria and another met him in .(Egypt(۴

Yet another report states that the 'Imam was resident in the mountains near Mecca about the year ۲۹۳/۹۰۵.(۵) According to the second Saf’ir, the Imam used to perform the pilgrimage every year(۶). All these narrations would seem to indicate that the Imam did not stay in one

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.T. al-Ghayba, ۱۶۳-۵ -۱

.Ibn al-Jawzi, al-Muntazam, VI, ۴۶ -۲

.Kama’l, ۹۲-۳, quoted from Kitab al-Tanbih by Abu Sahl al-Nawbakhti -۳

.T. al-Ghayba, ۱۶۶, ۱۹۵-۶ -۴

.T. al-Ghayba, ۱۶۶, ۱۶۵ -۵

.Kama’l, ۴۴۰ -۶

place for more than a short time, perhaps fearing that the authorities would discover .his identity and plot against his life

The Qaramita's use of the Prophetic traditions predicting the rise of al-Qa’im (۳.۳ al_Mahdi in their struggle to gain immediate political success may have made the

Imamites give greater emphasis to the physical signs which would precede the rise of .al-Qa'im as mentioned in the Prophetic traditions and the statements of the Imams

Al-Kulayni, who was a contemporary to the second Saf'ir, and his student al_Nu'mani narrate, as has been mentioned before, five signs which must precede the rise of the :real al-Qa'im al_Mahdi

.al_Sufyani will rise in Syria and dominate it for only nine months (١)

At the same time a rebel called al_Yamani (al_Qahtani)(١) will start a rebellion and (٢) .advance towards Mecca

Afterwards the pure soul, a descendant of al_Hasan, will revolt in Medina. Its (٣) .inhabitants will kill him and send his head to al_Sufyani

He will dispatch an army against Medina, but God will cause it to sink into the (۴) .ground in the vicinity of the city

Thereupon in the morning an outcry in the sky will announce the full name of al- (۵) Qa'im al_Mahdi, who accordingly will rise in Mecca. These events will take place (consecutively within one year.(٢

It is clear from the Imamite presentation of these signs that they considered them a refutation of the claims of the Isma'ili leader who called himself al_Mahdi after his (rising in ٢٩۶/٩٠٨.(٣

The emphasis which

The Prophet's companion 'Abd Allah b. 'Amr b. al-As used to narrate a Prophetic - ١ tradition predicting the rise of al-Qahtani, whose rising is only a sign for the rise of al-Qa'im al-Mahdi. However, Mu'awiya prohibited this companion from narrating the tradition, because he thought that the spread of such traditions would encourage the .people to overthrow him; B. Sahih, ٣٨۴

al-Kafi, VIII, ۲۰۹, ۲۶۴, ۲۶۵, ۲۷۴, ۳۱۰, ۳۳۱; from ۲۷۳/۸۸۶ onward 'Ali b. al-Husayn al- - ۲ Taymali used to narrate other signs of al-Qa'im's uprising (N. al-Ghayba, ۱۳۱, ۱۶۴; .Kama'l, ۶۴۹-۶۵۶; al-Hadrami, Asl Ja'far b. Shurayh al Hadrami, f. ۳۷a, ۳۹a, ۴۸a
.Tabari, III, ۲۲۲۵ -۳

was given to these signs served to prevent the ordinary Imamites from involving themselves in Shiite activities with which the Imamite organization (al_Wikala) was not involved. This view is confirmed by the fact that around this period many traditions were being related and attributed to the previous Imams warning the .(Imamites not to participate in any revolution before the rise of al-Qa'im(۱

The circulation of these traditions led people to feel that they should live peaceably and not involve themselves in any activities which might lead to revolution. This conclusion along with the five signs of the rise of al-Qa'im, encouraged some Imamites to put forward the idea that the establishment of the state of the People of the House (Ahl al_Bayt) is the responsibility of al-Qa'im himself and that any militant .decision must be delayed until the rise of al-Qa'im

In fact these traditions were intended as warnings against taking part in militant activities led by false claimants. But because of the way people interpreted them, very little attention was given to the traditions which encouraged the people to prepare for the rise of the Twelfth Imam after his occultation. It is reported that the tenth Imam ,said

If your Imam goes into occultation, expect freedom from grief (to come from)" (beneath your feet."(۲

It is clear that the above statement of al_Hadi meant that it is the responsibility of every follower of the hidden Imam to prepare for the rise of their Imam by their own .efforts

It is most likely

۱- Al-Nu'mani devotes a section of his work al-Ghayba to the refutation of the claims of the Isma'ilis (N. al-Ghayba, ۵۳-۷, ۱۷۶-۸۰); al-Kulayni reports a narration on the authority of al-Sadiq, forbidding his follower 'Umar b. Hanzala from taking part in any 'Alid revolution before the outcry in the sky; al-Kafi, VIII, ۳۱۰. See also Ikhtiyar, ۲۶۲-۳.

۲- Bihar, LI, ۱۶۱.

that this quiescent approach was encouraged by the Imamite scholars, whose role increased during the time of the second Saf'ir(۱). These people trained the ordinary Imamites to follow the instructions of the narrators during the occultation of the Imam. They were aided in achieving this aim by a statement attributed to the Twelfth Imam:

"Concerning the occurrences which will happen, consult the narrators of our traditions, because they are my proof towards you, and I am the Proof of Allah."(۲)

It appears that by such methods the Imamite narrators were able to prevent the Imamite masses from taking part in the militant activities of the Qaramita. However, this quiescent attitude, which was only a precautionary measure taken against the Isma'ilis, developed later into the fundamental approach towards the question of the rise of al-Qa'im.

۴. The Death of Abu Ja'far

It is reported that the second Saf'ir prophesied the time of his death and prepared his own gravestone upon which Qur'anic verses and the names of the Imams were inscribed. He died in ۳۰۵/۹۱۷(۳) and was buried in his house on the road leading to Kufa, on the western side of Baghdad(۴).

The Career of the Third Saf'ir, al-Nawabakhti

۱. Al_Nawbakhti's Activities During the Time of the Second Saf'ir

The third Saf'ir was Abu al_Qasim al_Husayn b. Ruh b. Abi Bahr al-Nawbakhti. He remained in the office in the years ۳۰۵_۳۲۶/۹۱۷_۹۳۷, although the date of his birth is not known. According to Ibn Shahr Ashub, al_Nawbakhti was a close associate of the

eleventh Imam, al'Askari, and was his Gate (Bab)(۵), but it is difficult to accept such a report because al…'Askari died

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For a full account of the increase of the role of the Imamite fuqaha', see Chapter -۱ .VII

.Kama'l, ۴۸۴ -۲

Al-Tusi gives two dates for the death of Abu Ja'far, the first of which, ۳۰۴/۹۱۶, is on -۳ the authority of the grandson of Abu Ja'far, Hibat Allah. The second report attributed to Abu Ghalib al-Zurari, the agent of Ibn Ruh in Kufa puts the date at ۳۰۵/۹۱۷. Because the latter had close relations with Abu Ja'far and was his contemporary, it seems that his report is more likely to be accurate; T. al-Ghayba, ۲۳۸-۹; al-Kamil, VIII, ۸۰; Abu al-Fida, al-Mukhtasar, II, ۶۹.

T. al-Ghayba, ۲۳۸-۹. On the eastern side of Baghdad there is a tomb situated in a -۴ mosque called al-Khullani. The people believe that it is the grave of Abu Ja'far. Since al-Tusi mentions that his grave is on the western side it is possible that his corpse was transported to the new grave, but there is no available source to support such a claim.

.Ibn Sahr Ashub, Manaqib, I, ۴۵۸ -۵

.in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴ and al…Nawbakhti died in ۳۲۶/۹۳۷

There are several reports indicating that al…Nawbakhti was a native of the traditional Shiite city of Qumm. Al…Kashshi and Yahya b. Abi Tayy (d. ۶۳۰/۱۲۳۲) called him .(al…Qummi(۱

Moreover al…Nawbakhti was fluent in the Persian dialect of the people of Abah, one of the suburbs of Qumm(۲), and this suggests that he belonged to the branch of Banu Nawbakht resident in Qumm. However, he had emigrated to Baghdad during the time of the first Saf'ir. According to al…Tusi, he was brought up in Baghdad under the guardianship of Muhammad b. 'Ali Bilal,(۳) who later denied that Abu Ja'far al…'Umari .was. the second Saf'ir of the Twelfth Imam

Al…Nawbakhti joined the service of the second Saf'ir and became his agent (wakil).

Despite his youth al-Nawbakhti was distinguished by his shrewdness, particularly in his relations with opponents(4).

Perhaps it was this quality which enabled him to climb quickly in the ranks of the organization.

Al_Nawbakhti spent several years working as an agent for the second Saf'ir, who used to pay him a salary of ٣٠ dinars a month. He also received financial support from high Shiite officials and viziers like Banu Furat. The second Saf'ir employed him to look after his properties and made him the connecting link between himself and the other leaders of the Imamites(5).

According to al_Tusi, al_Nawbakhti was the intermediary between the second Saf'ir and the two agents of Kufa, al_Zajawzji and Abu Ghalib al_Zurari(6). His service in the Wikala helped him in contacting

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1- Ikhtiyar, ٥٥٧. The work of Ibn Abi Tayy is not extant, but al_Dhahabi used it in writing al_Nawbakhti's biography; al_Dhahabi, Tarikh al_Islam, f. ١٣٢.

2- T. al-Ghayba, ٢٠٩_١٠; Iqbal, Khandan Nawbakhti, ٢١٤.

3- T. al-Ghayba, ٢٥٢_٢٥٣.

4- T. al-Ghayba, ٢٥٠- ٢٥٢.

5- T. al-Ghayba, ٢٤٢_٣; Bihar, LI, ٣٥٥.

6- The narrator of this report is Abu Ghalib al_Zurari. He reports that he used to contact the second Safi'r via al_Nawbakhti, who when he became the third Safi'r, contacted the agents of Kufa through al_Shalmaghani; T. al-Ghayba, ٢٠٢.

high Shi'ite officials of the 'Abbasid administration, particularly his relatives Banu Nawbakht and also Banu Furat(1).

By the year ٢٩٨/٩١٠ he had become highly respected by the people. At that time an interesting occurrence took place which reveals his importance. Al_Saduq narrates that an 'Alid called al-'Aqiqi went to visit the vizier 'Ali b. 'Isa al_Jarrah asking him to

solve his financial problems, but the vizier would not listen to him. Therefore al-Nawbakhti sent a message to al-'Aqiqi and solved his difficulties(۲).

This narration gives some indication of the social position of al-Nawbakhti while he was still an agent of the second Saf'ir.

۲. The Installation of the Third Saf'ir

As we have already seen, (۱۰۶-۷) the ten eminent agents in Baghdad expected that Ja'far. b. Ahmad b. Matil would take over the office of the second Saf'ir when he died. But on his death bed, when the agents were all gathered together, he appointed Ibn Ruh al-Nawbakhti, saying that the Twelfth Imam had ordered him to do so(۳).

At that time the Imamites put forward different reasons for the designation of Ibn Ruh al-Nawbakhti. Umm Kulthum, the daughter of the second Saf'ir , thought that Ibn Ruh was promoted to the office of the deputyship (sifara) because of his close relationship with her father. She reports that her father even used to reveal to him what had occurred between himself and his slave-girls(۴).

However, according to the agent Ibn Qurd, the other nine agents in Baghdad, especially Ibn Matil, were closer to the second Saf'ir than Ibn Ruh(۵).

It seems

۱- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۴۲.

۲- Kama'l, ۵۰۵-۶.

۳- The testament of the second safi'r to Ibn Ruh al-Nawbakhti was reported on the authority of the agents, Muhammad b. Humam and Ja'far b. Ahmad b. Matil, who were present at that meeting and bore witness to the designation. Moreover Ibn Barina, the grandson of the second Safi'r, also reports the testament and agrees with the other agents in regard to its authenticity. Kama'l, ۵۰۳.

۴- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۴۲-۳.

۵- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۴۰.

most likely that Ibn Ruh had personal qualifications which made him a suitable Saf’ir. Indeed we have a report attributed to Abu Sahl al Nawbakhti to support this point. The latter was asked by some Imamites as to why he had not been promoted to the sifara instead of Ibn Ruh. He answered,

They (the Imams) know best about whom they have selected for this office. I am a" person who meets opponents and argues with them. If I had known what Abu al…Qasim (Ibn Ruh) knows about the Imam, perhaps in the course of my arguments, having found myself under the attack of enemies to give them wellfounded reasons for the existence of the concealed Imam, I would have pointed out his whereabouts.

But if Abu al…Qasim had the Imam underneath his garments, and if his flesh was being cut into pieces to make him reveal his whereabouts, he would not yield or reveal his presence to his foes." (۱)

This document indicates that Ibn Ruh was promoted to the sifara mainly because of his loyalty and the shrewdness which he had shown on several occasions. Therefore we cannot accept the opinion of Sachedina, who thinks that the appointment of Ibn Ruh as Saf’ir to the Twelfth Imam, "must have been influenced by another eminent member of the Nawbakht family, namely Abu Sahl Isma’il b. ‘Ali.

He was one of those leading Imamites, who were present in the last days of the second agent to bear witness to the designation of

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۱- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۵۵.

Abu al-Qasim as the agent."(۱)

In fact, there are also many points to encourage us to disagree with Sachedina's opinion.

First, the installation of all the twelve Imams in the office of the Imamate from Imam ‘Ali b. Abi Talib until the time of the Twelfth Imam, had been carried out neither by the

interference of their followers nor by election. As has been demonstrated repeatedly throughout this work the fact is that the promotion of each new Imam occurred according to the personal stipulation (al Ta yin bi_l_Nass) of the preceding Imam in his .last will

Moreover the installation of the first and second Saf'irs had followed the same method. They were promoted to the office of the Wikala by the order of the Imam .and there is no evidence to prove that Ibn Ruh was not similarly appointed

Second, none of the ten eminent agents, who were present at that meeting, expected to participate by election, nomination or other means in the appointment of Abu Ja'far's successor. On the contrary, they attended the meeting so as to know who .would be stipulated as the third Saf'ir by the order of the Imam himself

Third, the second Saf'ir had ordered his personal servant, Dhaka, that in the case of .(his death, he should hand his staff and the treasure chest over to Ibn Ruh(۲

Fourth, if we take into consideration the fact that the rest of the ten agents recognised the promotion of Ibn Ruh, especially Ibn Matil, who was expected

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Sachedina, The Doctrine of Mahdism in Imami Shi'ism (Ph.D.) Thesis, Toronto - ۱ .University (Canada, ۱۹۷۶), ۱۳۷
.al_Dhahabi, Tarikh al_Islam, f. ۱۳۲ -۲

to be the third Saf'ir(۱), and the fact that al_Shalmaghani, even after his own aspiration to the office of the Sifara recognised Ibn Ruh as the Saf'ir(۲), it is clear that Ibn Ruh must in fact have been appointed by the Imam himself and neither Abu Sahl .al_Nawbakhti nor his family did influence the Imam's decision

The Activities of Ibn Ruh al_Nawbakhti .۳

According to al_Dhahabi, after the death of the second Saf'ir in ۳۰۵/۹۱۷, his successor Ibn Ruh went to the headquarters (Dar al-Niyaba) of the organization, where he met

the eminent Imamites such as the servant of the second Saf'ir, Dhaka. The latter prepared the things which his master had entrusted to him, that is, the staff and the treasure chest containing the seals of the Imams, and handed them over to Ibn Ruh .as he had been instructed

Thereafter Ibn Ruh together with the other agents went to the house of Muhammad .b. 'Ali al_Shalmaghani[۳], his close associate who later became his rival

From the very beginning, Ibn Ruh proved his ability to lead the organization successfully. His shrewdness enabled him to avoid the consequences of participation in the sectarian discussions which took place at the palace of Ibn Yasar, one of the high officials of alMuqtadir, the caliph. He used to attend those discussions only as a .listener

According to al_Tusi, Ibn Ruh was so cautious that he even discharged his servant because he had cursed Mu'awiya[۴]. Perhaps he took this step to avoid the danger ,(posed by the vizier, Hamid b. al'Abbas (۳۰۶_۳۱۱/۹۱۸_۹۲۳

p: ۱۸۶

T. al-Ghayba, ۲۴۰. According to some reports, the decision that Ibn Ruh would be -۱ the successor of Abu Ja'far had already been revealed by Abu Ja'far himself to a few agents three years before his death in ۳۰۵/۹۱۷. Ja'far al_Mada'ini and Muhammad b. .'Ali al_Aswad were amongst the agents who received these instructions. Kama'l, ۵۰۱_۲

.T. al-Ghayba, ۲۵۶ -۲

.al_Dhahabi, Tarikh al_Islam, f. ۱۳۲ b -۳

.T. al-Ghayba, ۲۵۰_۱ -۴

.(who was well_known for his hatred of Shiites generally[۱]

There is evidence that the ten agents of the second Saf'ir continued their activities under al_Nawbakhti. Among these agents were Ja'far b. Ahmad b. Matil, Abu Abd Allah al_Katib, al_Hasan al_Wajna', Muhammad b. Humam,'Isma'il b. Ishaq al_Nawbakhti, Ahmad b. Matil, Muhammad al_Aswad, and al_Madd'im. Two other names also appear

in the lists of the agents in Baghdad: al_Shalmaghani and Ahmad b. Ibrahim .al_Nawbakhti

The latter was a narrator of traditions and the husband of Umm Kulthum, the daughter of the second Saf'ir, and Ibn Ruh employed him as his personal secretary. .(The former was appointed as an agent by Ibn Ruh after he had become the Saf'ir(٢

Through his ten agents in Baghdad Ibn Ruh directed the activities of the Imamite agents and their underground political cells in the other provinces. He sent his first letter of instructions to the agent of al_Ahwaz, Muhammad b. Nafis, on ٥th Shawwal .(٣٠٥/٢٣rd November ٩١٧, in which he confirmed him in his office(٣

He appointed his agent al_Shalmaghani to supervise the underground Imamite cells among the people of Band Bistam in Baghdad(٤) and made him the mediator between himself and the agents of Kufa, Abu Ja'far al_Zajawzji and Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Sulayman al-Zurari(٥). Al_Shalmaghani continued his supervision of the agents of Kufa and Baghdad until the year ٣١٢/٩٢٣, when Ibn Ruh discharged him from his office and .(excommunicated him after he had taught the incarnation of God inhuman form(٦

,'According to al_Tusi, Abu 'Abd Allah al_Hasan al_Wajna

.For a full account of the career of Hamid b. al_'Abbas, see al_Kubaysi, op. cit., ١٩٠_٩ -١

.Bihar, LI, ٣٢٠_١; T. al-Ghayba, ٢١٢, ٢٤٢_٣ -٢

.Iqbal, op. cit., ٢١٦ -٣

.Bihar, LI, ٣٧١; T. al-Ghayba, ٢٦٣ -٤

.T. al-Ghayba, ١٩٧_٨, ٢١٢ -٥

.al_Najashi, ٢٩٣_٤; Buzurg, Nawabigh al_Ruwat, ٢٨٩ -٦

one of the ten agents in Baghdad, practised his activities in Nisibin and Mosul. In ٣٠٧/٩١٩ he met a certain individual called Muhammad b. al_Fadl al_Mawsili who denied that Ibn Ruh was the Saf'ir of the Twelfth Imam. He tried to convince him that Ibn Ruh was truly appointed as Saf'ir by the Imam, but al_Mawsili argued that, if Ibn Ruh was

.so, he must show miracles as the first and the second Saf'irs did before

In order to content him, al…Hasan al…Wajna' brought him to Baghdad, where he saw with his own eyes Ibn Ruh's miracles which prompted him to recognize him as the (rightful Saf'ir.(١

This report reveals that al…Hasan al…Wajna' was appointed by the third Saf'ir to direct the Imamites' activities in the province of Jazira. In Wasit, al…Hasan b. Muhammad b. Qatat al…Saydalani, the Wakd al…Waqf during the time of the second Saf'ir, and Ibn Matil, who had worked as the connecting link between al…Saydalani and the second .(Saf'ir(٢), continued their activities during the time of Ibn Ruh(٣

As has already been noted, some reports reveal that because of the persecution of the Imamites which had been carried out by the caliphs al…Mu'tadid (٢٧٩…٨٩/٨٩٢…٩٠٢) and al…Muktafi (٢٨٩…٩٥/٩٠٢…٨) and their attempts to arrest the Imam, he changed his place of residence from Samarra to the Hijaz. This situation naturally led to difficulties .as regards the methods of communication between him and his agents

Furthermore information concerning the relations between the third Saf'ir and his agents in the other provinces

p: ١٨٨

.T. al-Ghayba, ٢٠٥…۶; Buzurg, Nawabigh al…Ruwat, ٩۶ -١
.Kama'l, ٥٠۴ -٢
.T. al-Ghayba, ٢۴٠ -٣

is rare and obscure. However, there is evidence that the Imam continued to practise his activities from Mecca. Al…Tusi relates that a certain Ya qub b. Yusuf al…Ghassani saw a group of men from different provinces come to the house where the Imam lived and correspond with them through an old serving woman. Some of those men .(were from Baghdad(١

Al…Saduq reports that the agent al…Hasan al…Wajna' met the Imam at the same house

in ۳۱۴/۹۲۶,(۲) which indicates that the residence of the Imam was in the Hijaz during the time of the third Saf'ir. But there is no available reference to the names of the agents in Mecca and Medina.

The Imam also had agents in Egypt who recognized the sifara of Ibn Ruh(۳). According to al_Tusi, al_Qasim b. al_ 'Ala was still the agent in Azerbayjan. He directed the Imamite activities through two assistants, that is Abu Hamid 'Umran b. al_Mufallis and Abu 'Ali b. Jahdar, and also used to look after the personal domain which the eleventh Imam, al_'Askari, had endowed to the Twelfth Imam.

Correspondence between al_Qasim b. al_'Ala and Ibn Ruh took place through a messenger who used to come to Azerbayjan. After the death of al_Qasim his son al_Hasan was promoted to the office by the order of the Imam(۴).

In Iran, Muhammad b. Ja'far al_Asadi al_Razi, the agent of Rayy, had been instructed by the second Saf'ir to supervise the activities of the agents of the other Iranian provinces. He continued this supervision during the

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۱- T. al-Ghayba, ۱۷۶, ۱۷۹_۸۰.

۲- Kama'l, ۴۴۳_۴.

۳- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۵۵.

۴- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۰۲_۵. According to Buzurg, al_Qasim died in ۳۰۴/۹۱۶. But al-Tusi refers to his activities during the time of the third Saf'ir (۳۰۵_۲۶/۹۱۷_۳۷), so his death must have occurred after ۳۰۴/۹۱۶; T. al-Ghayba, ۲۰۲.

time of the third Saf'ir(۱). But after the death of al-Razi in ۳۱۲/۹۲۴,۳۳ the method of communication between the agents in Iran and Ibn Ruh changed from indirect correspondence via al Razi to direct contact between Ibn Ruh and the agents.

Al_Saduq reports several narratives in support of this point. For example, 'Ali b. al_Husayn b. Babawayh, the leader of the Imamites in Qumm, made direct contact with the third Saf'ir via the agent in Baghdad, al-Aswad(۲).

An agent from Balkh, Muhammad b. al‐Hasan al‐Sayrafi, did likewise. He collected the tax dues (gold and silver) from the Imamites of Balkh and handed them over to Ibn Ruh in Baghdad, and he continued his direct contact even during the time of the fourth Saf'ir, al‐Sammari(۳).

In the same way al‐Husayn b. 'Ali al‐Qummi received ten gold ingots from Ibn Jawshir, who asked him to hand them over to Ibn Ruh, so he did so(۴). These reports indicate that the position of Ibn Ruh as the Saf'ir of the Twelfth Imam became well‐known amongst the Imamites, in contrast to that of the first and the second Saf'irs, whose office had been kept secret. For this reason some ordinary Imamites were encouraged to ignore the agents of their areas and contact the third Saf'ir directly.

Ibn Ruh was highly esteemed by the 'Abbasid court during the time of the caliph of al‐Muqtadir (۲۹۵‐۳۲۰/۹۰۷‐۹۳۲). This can be attributed to the influence of Ibn Ruh's family, Banu Nawbakht, in the 'Abbasid administration, an influence which

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۱- al‐Najashi, ۲۸۹.

۲- Kama'l, ۵۰۲.

۳- Kama'l, ۵۱۶- ۵۱۷.

۴- Kama'l, ۵۱۸‐۹.

had begun during the time of the caliph al‐Mansur (d.۱۵۸/۷۷۴) and lasted until the time of al‐Muqtadir. Ibn Ruh himself participated in the Abbasid administration. According to al‐Jahshayari, he was at one point in charge of the personal domain of the caliph (Diwan al‐Diya al-Khasya)(۱).

Therefore we find some agents, such as Abu Ghalib al-Zurari, paying respect to Ibn Ruh because of the economic and political influence of his family(۲). Abbas Iqbal illustrates Ibn Ruh's influence by reporting that, during the time of the vizier Hamid b. al'Abbas (۳۰۶‐۳۱۱/۹۱۸‐۹۲۳), Ibn Ruh's house became the place for the meetings of administrators, nobles, and deposed viziers, especially Banu Furat(۳).

Most likely Ibn Ruh exercised his influence upon the Shi'ites, who were working in the administration, encouraging them to employ their brothers in faith in the 'Abbasid administration and offer financial help to the needy among the Shiites in general. Certain references indicate that these instructions were put into action by ‘Ali b. Muhammad b. Furat. According to Ibn Khallikan, he used to support ۵,۰۰۰ people .(financially(۴

When he was a vizier he appointed the agent Abu Sahl al_Nawbakhti as governor of the Mubarik district of Wasit and Muhammad b. ‘Ali al_Bazawfari as governor of the district of al_Sulh and al_Muzara'at in Wasit(۵). Simultaneously Muhsin b. al_Furat apppointed the Baghdad agent al_Shalmaghani as deputy to certain governors in .(other districts(۶

Participation in the administration enabled the agents to study the economic and political situation of the government and facilitated communications through their administrative

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al_Jahshayari, al_wuzara', ۳۰۰ -۱

.T. al-Ghayba, ۱۹۹ -۲

.Iqbal, op. cit., ۲۱۷ -۳

.Ibn Khallikan, Wafayat al_A'yan (Cairo, ۱۹۴۸), III, ۹۹ -۴

.al_Sabi, op. cit., ۴۰_۱ -۵

.Ibn Miskawayh, op. cit., I, ۱۲۳ -۶

.positions

Despite Ibn Ruh's great influence he seems to have been put in a critical situation by the militant activities of the other Shiites, particularly the Qaramita. These were used by his rivals as a pretext to cause his arrest. In ۳۱۱/۹۲۳ a caravan of Baghdadi pilgrims, including some relatives of the caliph al_Muqtadir, were attacked and captured by the .Qaramita, an act which caused the people of Baghdad to be very upset

Since the Qaramita were Shiites,this gave the enemies of the Shiites, like Nasr al_Hajib the chamberlain, an excellent weapon against the vizier Ibn al_Furat. Nasr claimed that because Ibn al_Furat was Shiite, he had encouraged the Qaramita to attack the pilgrims. Moreover, the masses were provoked to shout in public that Ibn al_Furat and his son Muhsin were the "greater Qarmati and the lesser Qarmati". In ۳۱۲/۹۲۴, as a result of these events Ibn al_Furat and his son were discharged and then murdered(۱).

Al_Tusi reports that Ibn Ruh was arrested in ۳۱۲/۹۲۴, but does not give any reason for his imprisonment. Al_Dhahabi claims that his arrest was caused by the inflammatory propaganda against the Qaramita. He was accused of corresponding with the Qaramita in an effort to have them besiege Baghdad(۲).

According to Ibn ‘Arib, Ibn Ruh was arrested because he failed to hand over to the government the money which he owed it(۳).

This reveals that some officials may have falsely accused Ibn Ruh of corresponding with the Qaramita in order to facilitate his arrest.. In any case, Ibn

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۱- Ibn Miskawayh, op. cit., I, ۱۲۰_۷.
۲- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۰۰; al_Dhahabi, Tarikh al_Islam, f. ۱۳۲a.
۳- ‘Arib, op. cit., ۱۴۱.

Ruh spent five years in jail until the caliph, al_Muqtadir, released him in ۳۱۷/۹۲۹.(۱)

Ibn Ruh recovered his previous respect and reputation, renewed his direct supervision over the Imamite activities, and once again received money from the Imamites. Many of his relatives, such as Ishaq b. Isma’ili (d. ۳۲۲/۹۳۳), Ali b. al_ Abbas (d. ۳۲۴/۹۳۵) and al-Husayn b. Ali b. al_ Abbas, had managed to maintain high offices in the Abbasid administration, so his influence increased.

Many influential officials and deposed viziers like 'Ali b. Muqla sought his acquaintance

in order to pave the way for their advancement in the ‘Abbasid administration.(۲)

For example, the vizier Ibn Muqla spent ۲۰,۰۰۰ dinars on estates and endowed them as awqaf for the Talibiyyin in ۳۱۹/۹۳۱.(۳) But later he lost his office and therefore asked Ibn Ruh to help him. Ibn Ruh contacted his relative al_Husayn b. 'Ali b. al-’Abbas al_Nawbakhti, who was the secretary (katib) of Amir al_ Umara , Ibn Ra'iq, and asked him to support Ibn Muqla in his efforts to recover his office, which were successful in ۳۲۵/۹۳۶.(۴)

At the same time that the third Saf’ir was wielding his powerful influence in official circles, he was faced with the serious deviation of his main deputy, al_Shalmaghani, who began to make claims outside Islamic beliefs.

۴. The Third Saf’ir and al_Shalmaghani

Muhammad b. ‘Ali b. Abi al_‘Azaqir al_Shalmaghani, who was brought up in the village of Shalmaghan situated in the suburbs of Wasit, became one of the reciters (qurra) of the Qur'an in Wasit. Afterwards he moved to Baghdad

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۱- Arib, op. cit., ۱۴۱; T. al-Ghayba, ۲۰۰‘.

۲- Iqbal, op. cit., ۲۲۰

۳- Ibn Miskawayh, op. cit., I, ۲۲۵.

۴- al_Suli, al_Awraq, ۸۷.

where he joined the ‘Abbasid administration, working as secretary (katib).(۱)

He was also an Imamite scholar (faqih) and wrote eighteen works dealing with Shiite law and theology, among which is his book al_Ghayba. His writings were highly esteemed by the Imamites before his deviations.(۲)

It has been noted that after the promotion of Ibn Ruh to the sifara, he appointed al_Shalmaghani to direct the activities of the Imamites in Baghdad, especially those of Banu Bistam, and those of the two agents of Kufa, al_Zajawzji and al_Zurari.(۳)

Al_Shalmaghani continued directing the Imamites' activities in Baghdad and Kufa for many years. He was well_known for his impatient political ambitions, and he may have lost hope of gaining power in the near future by following the instructions of the Twelfth Imam to the letter. Therefore he decided to ignore the Twelfth Imam's instructions and started searching for other groups to achieve his political ambitions. According to Ibn Hawqal, al_Shalmaghani paid allegiance to the Isma'ili Mahdi(۴).

However, Ibn Hawqal is the only narrator of this occurrence, and he gives neither the date of al_Shalmaghani's deviation, nor the reason he later abandoned his Isma'ili ties. It is most likely that he turned away from the Isma'ilis to the underground movement of the Ghulat because he found in their belief in the incarnation of God (hulul) in human form the best means to put his political and economic ambitions into action.

According to al_Shalmaghani's belief, throughout the course of history God has been incarnated in human form.

۱- Ibn al_Athir, al-Lubab, II, ۲۷; Yaqut, Irshad al_Arib, I, ۲۹۶; Mujam al_Buldan, V, ۲۸۸.

۲- al_Najashi, ۲۹۳_۴; T. al-Fihrist, ۳۰۵_۶; T. al-Ghayba, ۱۵۸, ۲۲۱, ۲۶۷. It seems that the extant work called Fiqh al_Rid'a is in fact Kitab al_Taklif of al_Shalmaghani because it has a tradition concerning testimony (al_Shahada) and another concerning the definition of the measure called kurr which al_Shalmaghani gave in contrast to the other Imamites.

۳- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۱۲, ۲۶۳.

۴- Ibn Hawqal, op. cit., ۲۱۱.

In other words, God was incarnated first in the body of Adam and thereafter transmigrated to the bodies of the Prophets. After the Prophet Muhammad, He transmigrated to the bodies of the Imams until the time of the eleventh Imam, and then He appeared in the body of al-Shalmaghani himself. Simultaneously Allah had created His foe Iblis, who was also incarnated and who transmigrated throughout the

.course of history into a series of wicked human forms

According to al‑Shalmaghani, Allah's purpose in His incarnation and transmigration was to prove His existence and His excellence(۱).

Al‑Shalmaghani did not leave the Imamite organization immediately after his deviation nor did he announce the incarnation of God in his own body. Several reports suggest that he used his office as a deputy of the Saf'ir, Ibn Ruh, to train gradually the agents who were below him to accept his heretical teachings. The agent Muhammad b. Humam reports that he heard al‑Shalmaghani saying, "The truth (God) is one, but His forms are several.

One day He takes on a white form, another day a red one, and on another a blue one." Ibn Humam reports, "This was the first statement which caused‑me to reject al‑Shalmaghani, because this was the doctrine of the people of the incarnation of God (al‑Hululiyya)."(۲)

According to another report al‑Shalmaghani managed to persuade some agents together with their families, especially the agents of Banu Bistam, to accept the doctrine of the incarnation of God and the transmigration of souls. Afterwards he divulged to

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۱- Yaqut, Irshad al‑Arib, I, ۳۰۱‑۳, al‑Kamil, VIII, ۲۱۸‑۹.

۲- Bihar, LI, ۳۷۴; Hashim al‑Hasani, op. cit., II, ۵۷۵.

them that the soul of the Prophet had transmigrated into the body of the second Saf'ir Abu Ja'far, the soul of 'Ali b. Abi Talib had transmigrated into the body of the third Saf'ir Ibn Ruh, and the soul of Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, had transmigrated into the body of Umm Kulthum, the second Saf'ir's daughter.

At the same time al‑Shalmaghani told the sub‑agents not to divulge this secret, because it was the true faith(۱).

It appears that Ibn Ruh discovered the deviation of al-Shalmaghani through a female missionary, Umm Kulthum, who used to supervise the Imamite activities among the females of Banu Bistam. He ordered her to stop her relations and her secret meetings .with them

He told her that al_Shalmaghani had impressed his deviation so deeply on their hearts that they would even accept it if he were to claim that Allah Himself had become incarnated in his body; then he would follow in al_Hallaj's footsteps and claim that he .(was Allah(۲

The precise date of this incident is unknown. However, according to Ibn al_Athir the deviation of al_Shalmaghani began during the early time of the vizierate of Hamid b. al_'Abbas, between the years ۳۰۶_۳۱۱/۹۱۸_۹۲۳.(۳) This is consistent with al_Tusi's report, which indicates that the deviation of al_Shalmaghani must have occurred before (۳۱۲/۹۲۴.(۴

After discovering al_Shalmaghani's heretical ideas, Ibn Ruh discharged him from his office and caused knowledge of his heresy to become widespread, first among the people of Banu Nawbakht and then among others(۵).Afterwards he ordered the agents

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.Bihar, LI, ۳۷۲; al_Sadr, op. cit., I, ۵۱۶ -۱

Such a claim obviously contradicts the beliefs of both the Shia and the Sunni alike. -۲ For details of God's essential nature according to the Imamites, see al-Hilli, al_Hasan b. Yusuf, Anwar al_Malakut fi Sharh al_Yaqut (Teheran, ۱۳۳۸), ۷۷_۸۵, and his al_Bab al_Hadi Ashar, A Treatise on the principles of Shiite theology, trans. from Arabic from W. Miller (London ۱۹۵۸), ۱۵_۵۲

.al_Kamil, VIII, ۲۱۸_۹ -۳

.T. al-Ghayba, ۲۶۸ -۴

.T. al-Ghayba, ۲۶۵ -۵

.to sever their relations with him

It seems that the agent of Kufa, Muhammad b. Ahmad al…Zajawzji followed this order, because al…Tusi reports that he considered anyone possessing the book al…Taklif by .(al-Shalmaghani as extremist(١

But the agents of Banu Bistam in Baghdad refused Ibn Ruh's order and continued to receive instructions from al…Shalmaghani. For this reason Ibn Ruh disclosed al…Shalmaghani's situation to all the Imamites and excommunicated him along with all .(those who paid attention to him(٢

Ibn Ruh's announcement reveals that a considerable body of the agents in Baghdad and the ordinary believers had been influenced by al…Shalmaghani. After his excommunication, he began propagating the idea that he and not Ibn Ruh was the .(rightful representative (Saf'ir) of the Twelfth Imam(٣

Through this claim and his belief in the incarnation of Allah in the bodies of the Prophets and the Imams, al…Shalmaghani tried to monopolize the economic and political positions of the organization. Later he even advanced the claim that Allah was present in his own body," and that Iblis was localized in the human form of the .Twelfth Imam, since the latter was known as al-Qa'im

Here al…Shalmaghani was claiming that al-Qa'im ("the one standing") meant Iblis, who had refused to prostrate himself before Adam when other angels had done ".(so(۴

He also claimed that 'Ali b. Abi Talib was Allah, and that He had sent Muhammad to be His Prophet, but that the latter had betrayed Him. Therefore 'Ali gave Muhammad a ,period of truce lasting about ٣۵٠ years

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.T. al-Ghayba, ٢۵٣…۴ -١

.T. al-Ghayba, ٢۵۶۴ -٢

.al…Kamil, VIII, ٢١٨ -٣

Yaqut, Irshad al…Arib, I, ٣٠٢; Ibn al…Athir, al-Lubab, II, ٢٧ -۴

at the end of which Islamic law would be changed(١). Then the law would have a new interpretaton, e.g. Paradise would be the acceptance of al-Shalmaghani's claim and allegiance to him, while Hell would be the rejection of his doctrine.

Moreover, he aimed at eliminating the main claimants to the caliphate, particularly the ‘Alids and the ‘Abbasids, and considered himself the rightful claimant to all religious and political authority(٢).

The political ambitions of al_Shalmaghani are obvious in his materialistic interpretation of the Qur'anic verses concerning Hell and Paradise to serve his own ambitions. These are especially apparent with reference to two points. Firstly, he fixed a date for the change of the Islamic Shari’a; ٣٥٠/٩۶٧. By this "prophecy" he was attempting to mobilise people to support him in his preparation for the "coming age".

Secondly he concentrated his propaganda among the high officials of the ‘Abbasid army and administration and gained a considerable number of followers, like Ahmad b. Muhammad b. ‘Abdus, Ibrahim b. Abi 'Awn, the author of the book al_Tashbihat, Ibn Shabib al_Zayyat, Abu Ja’far b. Bistam and Abu ‘Ali b. Bistam, all of whom were secretaries (kuttab) of the state(٣).

In ٣١٢/٩٢۴ al_Muhsin b. al_Furat, the son of the vizier Ibn al_Furat, joined his side and enabled his followers to penetrate the 'Abbasid administrative circles(۴). Moreover, al_Husayn b. al_Qasim b. ‘Ubayd Allah b. Wahb, who held the vizierate between the years ٣١٩_٢٠/٩٣١٢, was one of the partisans of al_Shalmaghani(۵).

It has already been noted that the third Saf’ir

١- T. al-Ghayba, ٢۶۶.

٢- Yaqut, Irshad al_Arib, I, ٣٠٢_٣; al_Shibi, op. cit., ٢٠٣.

٣- al_Dhahabi, al_‘Ibar, II, ١٩١.

۴- Ibn Miskawayh, op. cit., I, ١٢٣.

۵- Yaqut, Irshad al_Arib, I, ٣٠٣.

was imprisoned in ۳۱۲/۹۲۴. Al_Shalmaghani seized this oppportunity to expand his activities among the Imamites, who had not yet received an answer from the Imam himself concerning the claims of al_Shalmaghani. Therefore the Imam sent via Ibn Ruh this pronouncement concerning his attitude towards the claims of :al_Shalmaghani

Muhammad b. 'Ali, known as al_Shalmaghani, is one of those upon whom Allah has ... hastened His judgement and to whom He has granted no respite. He has deviated from Islam and separated himself from it. He has become an apostate from the religion of Allah, making claims which indicate the denial of Allah, the Most Glorious and High, fabricating lies and falsehoods, and pronouncing untruths and great trans_ gressions. Those who associate another with Allah are in far error and clearly suffer .great loss

For indeed we declare ourselves free (of any relationship with al_Shalmaghani) before Allah, may He be exalted, and His messenger and his family, may the blessings of Allah, His peace, His mercy and His benediction be upon them according to His benevolence; while we curse him (i.e. al_Shalmaghani), may the curses of Allah be showered successively (upon him) externally and internally, secretly and publicly, at .every time and in every circumstance

And (may the curse of Allah be) upon those who agree with him and follow him, and also upon those who, having heard our announcement, continue to pay allegiance to .him

So inform them (the Imamite agents) that we shall guard and take precautions against him, as was the

p: ۱۹۹

case with those who preceded him and held similar views, like al_Shari'i, al-Numayri, al_Hilali, al_Bilali and so forth. For the traditions of Allah are conformable to us. In Him we place our trust, and from Him we seek assistance. He is sufficient for us in all our (affairs and is the best of Guardians.(۱

According to al‑Tusi the agent Muhammad b. Humam received this pronouncement from Ibn Ruh while he was in prison. He spread it personally among all the agents in Baghdad and sent it to the agents in the other cities until it became well‑known among the ordinary Imamites(۲).

According to Ibn al‑Athir, Ibn Ruh disclosed al‑Shalmaghani's claim even to the ‘Abbasids. As a result in ۳۱۳/۹۲۵ the vizier al-Khaqani tried to arrest him(۳), an attempt which brought about the imprisonment of many people who had inclined towards him(۴).

However he disappeared and escaped to Mosul, where he took refuge from the ruler Nasir al‑Dawla al‑Hasan b. ‘Abd Allah b. Hamdan. He lived there in alvillage called Ma althaya in the vicinity of Mosul. However, he did not break off communication with his followers in Baghdad(۵).

According to al‑Najashi, during his concealment in the village of Ma'alth'aya, al‑Shalmaghani narrated his books to a certain Abu ‘Abd Allah al‑Shaybani. He was an Imamite Muhaddith who lived in the Nawbakhtiyya district of Baghdad," but he later turned away from the Imamite school(۶).

In ۳۱۶/۹۲۸ al‑Shaybani returned secretly to Baghdad(۷) in order to be in direct contact with his followers, whose activities had spread widely

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۱- al‑Sadr, op. cit., ۵۱۷‑۸.

۲- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۶۹.

۳- al‑Kamil, VIII, ۲۱۷.

۴- Yaqut, Irshad al‑Arib, I, ۲۹۹.

۵- al‑Najashi, ۲۸۹, ۲۹۴.

۶- Al‑Shaybani seems to have been an Imamite Muhaddith but after the deviation of al‑Shalmaghani he inclined toward him, ignoring the Twelfth Imam's pronouncement against him; T. al-Fihrist; ۲۹۹; al‑Najashi, ۳۰۹.

۷- al‑Sadr, op. cit., I, ۵۲۷; Hashim al‑Hasani, op. cit., II, ۵۷۵.

among the officials of the Abbasid administration, a development which can possibly .be regarded as a step toward his objective of obtaining power

Al-Husayn b. al-Qasim b. ‘Ubayd Allah b. Wahb, the partisan of al-Shalmaghani, was promoted to the vizierate in ۳۱۹/۹۳۱ and his name was stamped on the coin beside the .name of the caliph al-Muqtadir[1]

As a vizier Ibn Wahb enabled his partisans to assume high positions, but after a year he was discharged. Later the new caliph al-Qahir (۳۲۰-۳۲۲/۹۳۲-۹۳۴) exiled him to al-Riqqah in Syria because of his allegiance to al-Shalmaghani. He also arrested his .comrades, especially the Banu Bistam, and seized their property[2]

This campaign continued until al-Shalmaghani himself was arrested in ۳۲۳/۹۳۴. Along with a few of the leading personalities of his movement, like Ibn Abi 'Awn, he was tortured and executed, and the corpses were burnt at the police headquarters (Dar .al-Shurta) on the western side of Baghdad[3]

Ibn Ruh's influence and authority among the ‘Abbasids increased after the persecution of al-Shalmaghani, who was their common enemy. Thus Ibn Ruh .(recovered his high influence and became close to the caliph al-Radi (۳۲۲-۲۹/۹۳۴-۴۰

Moreover it appears that Ibn Ruh's cooperation with the ‘Abbasids against al-Shalmaghani led the caliph al-Radi to think that his activities with the Imamites had no connection with the Twelfth Imam and would probably cease in the near future. :Al-Suli reports

Al-Radi sometimes mentioned that the Imamites used to hand the khums (al-amwal) over to Ibn Ruh but we refuted this accusation, and claimed

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۱- .Ibn Miskawayh, op. cit., I, ۲۱۵-۷, ۲۲۳

۲- .Ibn Miskawayh, I, ۲۶۷

۳- .al-Mas'udi, al-Tanbih, ۳۴۳; Yaqut, Irshad al-Arib, I, ۲۹۹-۳۰۴

that it was a lie. So he said to us, "What is wrong with that? By Allah, I wish that there were a thousand people like him to whom the Imamites might bring their possessions so that Allah might impoverish them. I do not mind if they (Ibn Ruh and others) become rich through receiving their possessions (i.e. those of the Imamites)."(۱)

Ibn Ruh died on the ۱۸th of Sha'ban ۳۲۶/۲۰ June ۹۳۸, and was buried in al_Nawbakhtiyya district(۲) in the western side of Baghdad(۳). He was_ succeeded by Abu al_Hasan 'Ali b. Muhammad al-Sammar(۴).

The Fourth Saf'ir and the Complete Occultation of the Twelfth Imam

۱. The Career of the Fourth Saf'ir (۳۲۶–۳۲۹/۹۳۷–۹۴۱)

Al-Tusi reports that Ibn Ruh designated Abu al-Hasan 'Ali b. Muhammad al-Sammari as his successor(۵). According to al-Tabarsi, this designation was by the stipulation and order of the Twelfth Imam himself(۶).

His surname is derived from the name of al-Sammar or al-Saymar, situated in one of the districts of Basra, where the relatives of al-Sammari used to live(۷). According to al-Mas'udi many members of this family, like al-Hasan and Muhammad, the sons of Isma'il b. Salih and 'Ali b. Ziyad, had large estates in Basra. They devoted half of the income from these estates to the eleventh Imam, who used to receive it every year and correspond with them(۸).

Moreover, some of al-Sammari s relatives were agents of the Twelfth Imam. Among these was 'Ali b. Muhammad b. Ziyad, who had also been an agent to the tenth and eleventh Imams and who wrote a book called al-Awsiyya to confirm the Imamate of the Twelfth

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۱- al_Sufi, op. cit., ۱۰۴.

۲- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۵۲.

۳- At the present time the grave of Ibn Ruh is situated on the eastern side of Baghdad,

whereas al‌-Tusi mentions that this grave was in the Nawbakhtiyya district at the avenue which leads to Qantarat al‌-Shawk, which was located in the western side of Baghdad; Yaqut, Mujam al‌-Buldan, IV, ١٩١; al‌-'Amid, op. cit., ٧٠.

٤- Kama'l, ٥١٧.

٥- T. al-Ghayba, ٢٥٦.

٦- al-Tabarsi, al-Ihtijaj, II, ٢٩٦-٧.

٧- Buzurg, Nawabigh al-Ruwat, ٢٠٠. Saymara was the name of a town in the region of al-Jabal in Iran (Ibn Hawqal, op. cit., ١٥٨, ٢٥٩), but it seems that the surname of the fourth Saf'ir is derived from the river al-Sammar in Basra, because most of his relatives lived there; Ithbat, ٢٤٦-٧; al-Subki, Tabaqat al-Shafi'iyya, III, ٣٣٩.

٨- Ithbat, ٢٤٦-٧.

Imam(١).

He was the brother-inlaw of the vizier Ja'far b. Muhammad, a relationship which enabled him to achieve an important office in the 'Abbasid administration(٢). According to al-Kulayni, the Twelfth Imam divulged to him in a letter that his death would occur in ٢٨٠/٨٩٣, when it actually occurred(٣).

These points indicate that al-Sammari came from a family whose members were well-known for their Shiite beliefs and their service to the organization. In fact, such a background was necessary to enable al-Sammari to reach the office of the sifara with little opposition, especially if one takes into consideration the prolonged occultation of the Twelfth Imam, which shook the faith of a considerable body of the Imamites.

However, the sifara of al-Sammari was too short-lived to cause any remarkable changes in the relations between him and the other agents. Although nothing is known about the details of his activities, a report mentioned by al-Saduq makes it clear that the agents recognised him as the rightful Saf'ir and handed the khums over to him(٤).

Al-Sammari died on the ١٥th of Sha'ban ٣٢٩/١٥th May ٩٤١ and was buried in al-Khaljani street in the quarter of al-Muhawwal(٥). According to Yaqut, this quarter was situated to the north of the village of Buratha, on the western side of Baghdad(٦).

A week before the death of al-Sammari the following pronouncement (Tawqi') was :issued by the Twelfth Imam

May Allah give good rewards to your bretheren concerning you (i.e. on your death), for indeed you shall die after six days. So

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۱- Bihar, LI, ۲۳.

۲- Ithbat, ۲۴۰.

۳- al-Kafi, I, ۵۲۴.

۴- Kama'l, ۵۱۷.

۵- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۵۷-۸; Bihar, LI, ۳۶۲.

۶- Yaqut, Mujam al-Buldan, I, ۵۳۲.

prepare your affairs, and do not appoint anyone to take your place after your death. For the second occultation has now occurred, and there can be no appearance until, after a long time when Allah gives His permission, hearts become hardened and the .world becomes filled with injustice

And someone shall come to my partisans (Shi'a) claiming that he has seen me; but beware of anyone claiming to have seen me before the rise of al-Sufyani and the .(outcry from the sky, for he shall be a slanderous liar(۱

Six days after the announcement of this document the principal agents congregated at the death-bed of the fourth safer and asked him who was to take charge of his office. Al-Sammari replied, "To Allah belongs the matter which He shall accomplish" "((Li-llah amr huwa balighuh).(۲

This was the last statement heard from al-Sammari, the fourth Saf'ir. Thereby direct communication between the safars and the Twelfth Imam was brought to an end. In other words the short occultation had ended and the second occultation or, according .to the later sources, the major occultation had begun

۲. An Analysis of the Tawqi' of the Fourth Saf'ir

:The pronouncement of the Twelfth Imam illustrates five points

Firstly, it reveals that the fourth Saf'ir, al-Sammari, would die six days after the issue of the Tawqi'. According to the Imamite reports, al-Sammari did die on the mentioned day. It is worth pointing out that the Twelfth Imam is also said to have predicted the times of the deaths of the three previous Saf'irs(۳). For the Imamites this prediction

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۱- Kama'l, ۵۱۶; T. al-Ghayba, ۲۵۷; al-Tabarsi, al-Ihtijaj, II, ۲۹۷; Sadr al-Din al-Sadr, op. cit., ۱۷۹-۸۰.

۲- Kama'l, ۵۱۶.

۳- T. al-Ghayba, ۲۳۷-۸.

.was strong proof that the Tawqi' had been issued by the Imam himself

Secondly, the Imam ordered the fourth Saf'ir not to designate anyone to succeed him or to be in charge of his office, "wa-la tusi ila ahad fa-yaqum maqamak ba'd wafatik."(۱)

This clearly indicated the end of direct communication between the Imam and his Saf'irs and agents. Hence the Imam in the Tawqi denies that he will have any personal :Saf'ir during the second occultation before his return

"And someone shall come to my partisans (Shi'a) claiming that he has seen me; but beware of anyone claiming to have seen me before the rise of al-Sufyani and the outcry from the sky, for he shall be a slanderous liar".(۲)

The highly developed activities of the organization, which continued for about ۶۹ years between the years ۲۶۰-۳۲۹/۸۷۴-۹۴۱ were ended by the death-bed statement of the fourth Saf'ir as regards his successor: God would do what He wished in this matter, "Li-llah amr huwa balighuh."(۳)

Thirdly, the Tawqi' announces the beginning of the second, or the complete occultation (Fa-qad waqa T. al-Ghayba al-Thaniya aw al-Tamma)(۴), which al-

Nu'mani describes as the period of confusion, al-Hayra(۵). Al-Mufid calls it the longer occultation (al-Ghayba al-Tula), whereas the later Imamites refer to it as the major occultation (al-Ghayba al-Kubra)(۶).

Fourthly, there can be no appearance of the Imam until Allah gives him His permission. His return will take place when it becomes far from the expectation of the people because of the hardening of their hearts and the filling of

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۱- Kama'l, ۵۱۶.

۲- Kama'l, ۵۱۶.

۳- Kama'l, ۵۱۶.

۴- Kama'l, ۵۱۶.

۵- N. al-Ghayba, ۹۲.

۶- al-Irshad, ۳۹۹; Bihar, LIII, complete work.

the world with tyranny(۱).

Fifthly, the Tawqi' indicates that the appearance of the Imam will be preceded by two inevitable signs, that is the rise of al-Sufyani, who according to early traditions will rise and dominate Syria, and the outcry in the sky in the name of the Imam.

After quoting the-Tawqi' Rajkowski states as follows:

"... this document is a clear indication that the leaders of al-Shi'a al-Qat'iyya had lost hope in the speedy arrival of al-Mahdi and thought that the moment of al-Zuhur might still be very distant; so that it was no longer possible to keep up the pretences of direct communication between the successive Ambassador and the Sahib al-Zaman. It was better to leave the Shiites without an official mediator, and rely only on al-Mahdi's invisible protection and inspiration".(۲)

Rajkowski seems to be suggesting that the eleventh Imam died heirless and the leading Imamites invented the idea of the occultation (al-Ghayba) and claimed that

the Saf'irs had direct communications with al-'Askari's successor. Rajkowski's theory seems to have inspired Jihad al-Hasani to hold similar views concerning the role of the four Saf'irs. He says,

"... by resorting to the claim of being agents for the concealed Twelfth Imam, the four Twelver agents were apparently able to put themselves forward in the position of the leadership though they were not from the line of descent of the Prophet".(٣)

The hypothesis of these two authors might be sound if there were no clear proof that al-'Askari had left a successor or

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١- Kama'l, ۵١۶.

٢- Rajowski, op. cit., ۶٧٣-۴.

٣- al-Hasani, op. cit., ٢٧٨.

that traditions were circulating in Imamite circles before ٢۶٠/٨٧۴ indicating that the series of the Imams would end with the Twelfth Imam, who would be al-Qa'im.(١)

However, it has been demonstrated that it was highly probable that the eleventh Imam had showed his son to about forty of his adherents among whom were the first two agents, 'Uthman b. Said and Muhammad b. 'Uthman(٢).

Furthermore, the evidence has strongly suggested that the eleventh Imam sent his son to Medina in ٢۵٩/٨٧٣,(٣) where he stayed during the time of the first Saf'ir. Moreover, the Imamite organization, the Wikala, was established during the time of the sixth Imam al-Sadiq.

Had it appeared suddenly after the death of al- 'Askari without the spread of traditions before ٢۶٠/٨٧۴ predicting the Ghayba and without the explicit appointment of 'Uthman b. Said and his son Muhammad (Abu Ja'far) by the eleventh Imam as the agents of his son the Twelfth Imam(۴), one could agree with Rajkowski's statement and with Montgomery Watt, who says:

the Imamite theory of twelve Imams did not come into being of its own accord, as ..." it were, following upon certain events known to all. The theory was an interpretation of selected events, and was deliberately created by politicians to further their own – (perhaps very worthy – ends". (۵)

We have already mentioned that the Imamites consider Wilaya (allegiance and obedience to Ahl al-Bayt) as the fifth pillar of Islam. According to them, the practice of (all the other pillars (the prayer, zakat, fasting, pilgrimage

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۱- For these traditions see al-'Asfari, op. cit., f. ۱-۲.

۲- Kama'l, ۴۴۲-۳; T. al-Ghayba, ۲۳۱-۲.

۳- Ithbat, ۲۴۷-۸.

۴- al-Kafi, I, ۳۲۹-۳۰.

۵- Watt, The Majesty that is Islam, ۱۷۰-۱.

is invalid without the recognition of the rights of the Imam(۱). They report many traditions stressing the necessity of the existence of an Imam until the Day of Judgement, such as the well-known saying attributed to 'Ali b. Abi Talib:

Allah, I know that knowledge (al-'Ilm) cannot disappear completely, its sources cannot cease, and You cannot leave Your earth without a proof (Hujja) of You for Your creation, either manifest and unobeyed or afraid and unknown (i.e. in a state of occultation). Otherwise Your proofs (hujaj) would be (sent) in vain, and Your followers would go astray after You have guided them. (۲)

Al-Saffar (d. ۲۹۰/۹۰۲) reports that al-Baqir interpreted the Qur'anic verse, "Indeed you are a warner and for every people there will be a Guide." (al-Ra'ad, ۱۳:۷), as follows: The "warner" is the Prophet, peace be upon him, and in every time there is someone who will guide others to what the Prophet brought. These guides are first the Prophet of Allah, then the Guided ones (al-Hudat); that is, 'Ali and the Imams (the "legatees", (al-Awsiya), (۳)

Al-Kashshi reports a tradition attributed to the eighth Imam, al-Rid'a: "The Imam cannot pass away unless he sees his successor, except for al-Qa'im." (۴)

All of these traditions depict the Imamite belief in the necessity of the continuity of the Imama. Any break in its continuity would mean its overthrow as a principle of the religion. The short occultation did not signify the non-existence of the Twelfth Imam, because he continued to carry out his

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۱- al-Kafi, I, ۱۸۳, ۳۷۵, al-Tusi, al-Amali, I, ۱۲۴. Al-Kulayni devotes a complete section to the principle of Wilaya. He records about ۹۰ narrations containing an exegesis of Qur'anic verses concerning it, al-Kafi ۴۱۲-۳۸.

۲- al-Kafi, I, ۳۵۵, ۳۳۹. For a full account of these traditions, see al-Saffar, Basa'ir al-Darajat, f. ۲۳b; al-Mufid, Awa'il al-Maqalat, ۸; al-Kafi, I, ۱۷۷-۸, ۱۸۴.

۳- al-Saffar, Basa'ir al-Darajat, f. ۲۳b-۲۴a.

۴- Ikhtiyar, ۴۶۴-۵.

activities via his four Saf'irs until the year ۳۲۹/۹۴۱.

Thus, regardless of the "creations of politicians," it is quite clear that the first occultation of the Twelfth Imam occurred within a religious environment where this event had come to be expected.

As we have noted, the 'Abbasid authorities wanted to restrict the activities of the Imams, so they included them amongst their courtiers and placed them under house arrest, so that they could no longer practice their activities amongst their followers. Restrictions were placed upon the Imams from the time of al-RidH and were greatly increased during the Imamate of the eleventh Imam, al-'Askari (۱).

As a result, the Imams devised a policy to save their last successor from a similar situation. They realized that any son born to the eleventh Imam would be hidden from the eyes of the 'Abbasids so that he could carry out his activities incognito.

To this end they encouraged the transmission of traditions (hadith) predicting an Imam who would be hidden from sight and would implement his policies in secret amongst his followers; and this would be the Twelfth Imam. Such steps were taken so .as to prepare the Imamites to accept the Saf'irs as the Imam's intermediaries

In the light of this explanation, it is worth mentioning a few of the traditions which were reported by al-'Asfari, who died in ۲۵۰/۸۶۳, that is, ten years before the death of :al-'Askari

i) Al-Baqir said to his companion Abu al-Muqdam, "O Abu al-Muqdam, what would you do if an occultation

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۱- This can be noted in the tradition attributed to the ninth Imam, al-Jawad, who said, "If my son, 'Ali, died, a light from him will appear and when this light went off, another .light will be concealed. I warn those who doubt what will happen." N. al-Ghayba, ۹۹

sabta) occurred between the Haramayn (i.e. Mecca and Medina) . . . My father used to) "...say that would happen and that Allah does what He wills

ii) The Prophet is reported to have said, "I and eleven of my descendants and you, O 'Ali, are the axis of the earth, its pegs and its mountains. . . When my eleven ".descendants pass away, then chaos and disorder will occur among the people

iii) The Prophet is reported to have said, "(There will be) from my descendants eleven leaders (who will) be noble and receive and understand (knowledge). The last of them will be al-Qa'im, who will fill the world with justice after it has been filled with (tyranny."(۱

These and other traditions were spread in both Imamite and Zaydite circles. Al-'Asfari, who was a member of al-Zaydiyya al Jarudiyya, was himself awaiting the rise of al-Mahdi in the near future and used to carry his sword with him. As already mentioned, he once said that he carried his sword so that he would always be ready

(to fight along with al-Mahdi.(۲

According to al-Saduq these traditions and others predicting the occurrence of the Ghayba were the main reason for the Imamite acceptance of the Ghayba and for their being satisfied that the series of the Imams should stop at the Twelfth. For the Imamites the acceptance of the Ghayba is a matter of obedience to the orders of the Imams.

The Imamite Learned Men's Attitude Towards the Second Occultation .۳

As has already been indicated, during the period of the short occultation

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۱- For all these traditions see al-'Asfari, op. cit., f. ۱-۲ (Appendix); Kama'l, ۳۴۹.

۲- See Chapter I.

(۲۶۰-۳۲۹/۸۷۴-۹۴۱) more than two generations of Imamites were brought up under the careful supervision of the agents and with the teachings of the Imamite narrators (al-Muhaddith'un), in order that the new generation would recognize that religious authority derives from indirect communication with the hidden Imam, via his four Saf'irs.

Their arguments and instructions concerning the hidden Imam were based mainly on the traditions attributed to the previous eleven Imams before the year ۲۶۰/۸۷۴, including the traditions narrated by al- 'Asfari. Although the Imamites split into fifteen groups and held different views concerning the successor of al-'Askari at the time of the first Saf'ir, the teaching and the underground activities of the second Saf'ir met with success.

His followers (al-Imamiyya al-Qat'iyya) carried out intensive propaganda to prove the existence of the Twelfth Imam and the necessity for his occultation without specifying the date of his reappearance: "concerning the release from suffering (i.e. the rise of the Imam) it is in the hand of Allah and those who try to fix certain times for it are liars." (۱)

Thus the teachings and doctrine of the followers of the second Saf'ir dominated Imamite circles, whereas the other groups disappeared. During the time of the third and the fourth Saf'irs we find the new generation of Imamites more obedient to the Saf'irs and willing to accept their statements as the statements of the Twelfth Imam.

They were all the more willing because, as we have noted, all the pronouncements (Tawqi'at) issued to the four Saf'irs

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١- al-Tabarsi, al-Ihtijaj, II, ٢٨٣.

and attributed to the Twelfth Imam were written in the same handwriting and in the same style(١).

The identical handwriting explains the consensus among the Imamites to be obedient to the last pronouncement of the fourth Saf'ir, by which the first occultation came to an end and the second began.

There is evidence that when the last pronouncement of the Twelfth Imam proclaimed the end of direct communication with the fourth Saf'ir, the agents ceased their underground activities and in particular refrained from collecting the khums. In other words the Imamite underground organization (al-Wikala), which had been established during the time of al-Sadiq (d. ١۴٨/٧۶۵), was dissolved by that pronouncement.

Henceforth anyone claiming to be the Saf'ir of the Imam was considered an unbeliever and imposter. For this reason the Imamites cursed Muhammad b. Ahmad b. 'Uthman al-Umari, known as Abu Bakr al-Baghdgdi, the nephew of the second Saf'ir, when he claimed that he was the Saf'ir of the Twelfth Imam(٢). Al-Tusi gives an example of how the agents refrained from collecting' the khums:

Ahmad b. Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. al-Walid al-Qummi came to Basra as the representative of his father and the group (i.e. the agents in Qumm). The Imamites

.questioned him concerning rumours that he was the deputy of the Imam

But he denied them, saying: "I have no right in this matter" So they offered him money as a test, but he rejected it and said, "It is forbidden for me to take it, because I have no right in

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۱- ۶۹-۷۰ ,Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, Bahth Hawla al-Mahdi.

۲- ۳۷۷-۷۸ ,Bihar, LI.

(this matter (i.e. the deputyship of the Imam), and I have never made such a claim."(۱)

Perhaps these two examples are a further evidence that the theory of the occultation of the Twelfth Imam was not "the creation of politicians" to further their own ends. In fact, there were some people motivated by political and worldly aspirations, such as al-Shalmaghani and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, whose followers held that they were the .(Saf'irs of the hidden Imam. However, the Imamites totally rejected their claim(۲

The agents' decision to end their activities led the Imamite narrators (al-Muhaddithun, al-Ruwat) to the belief that since no new Saf'ir had been appointed, the second occultation which they called the "period of trial and confusion" had begun. They supported their conclusion with traditions attributed to the previous Imams indicating that al-Qa'im would have two forms of occultation before his rising, one of .them being short and the other long

Al-Nu'mani may have been the first scholar to give this particular interpretation to existing traditions. After quoting nine traditions predicting the two forms of Ghaybas and attributed to al-Sadiq on the authority of seven of his disciples(۳), al-Nu'mani :comments

The authenticity of these traditions mentioning that al-Qa'im has two occultations" has been proved - Praise be to Allah. For by bringing about the occultation He has .authenticated the statements of the Imams

As for the first occultation, it is that during which there were Saf’irs between the Imam and the people, safars who had been appointed by the Imam

p: ٢١٣

.T. al-Ghayba, ٢٧٠ -١

٢ - - Incidents recorded by Ibn Taghri Bardi indicate that the adherents of al-Shalmaghani continued their underground activities until the year ٣٤١/٩٥٢, when the ‘Abbasids discovered their cells. For a full account, see Nujum, III, ٣٠٧-٨.

٣- The disciples of al-Sadiq who narrated these traditions on his authority were Ishaq b. ‘Amman al-Sayrafi, Ibrahim b. ‘Amr al-Kannas Hisham b. Salim, al-Mufaddil b. ‘Umar, Hazim b. Habib, Abu Basir and Muhammad b. Muslim; N. al-Ghayba, ٩٠-١.

and who carried out their activities while living amongst the people... This is the short occultation, whose days have come to an end and whose period has passed away.

The second occultation is the one during which the Saf’irs and the mediators have been removed for a purpose intended by Allah and planned for in the creation. In other words, throughout this period testing, examination, trial, sifting and purification will be the lot of those who claimed (to be Imamites), just as is stated in the Qur'an:

It is not (the purpose) of Allah to leave you in your present state till He shall separate the wicked from the good. And it is not (the purpose of) Allah to let you know the unseen. (Al-Imran ٣:١٧٩).

This explains our statement that the Imam has two occultations and that we are . . living in the second”.(١)

Al-Nu'mani's interpretation of the two Ghaybas became the foundation for most explanations put forward by the Imamite jurists from the time of al-Saduq (d. ٣٨١/٩٩١) in Kamal al-Din wa-Tamam al-Nima and al-Khazzaz al-Razi al-Qummi (d. ٣٨١/٩٩١) in Kifayat al-Athar fi al-Nusus ala al-A'imma al-Ithna ‘Ashar through the period of al-Majlisi (d.١١١١/١٧٠٠) in Bihar al-Anwar.

:However, a contemporary scholar, Sachedina, writes as follows

It is plausible to maintain that the division of the Ghayba into short, and long is the" innovation of the Imamite jurists. In support of this division, traditions were either (invented or interpreted to accommodate the situation as it appeared to them".(۲

But Sachedina's hypothesis does not

p: ۲۱۴

.N. al-Ghayba, ۹۲ -۱

Sachedina, op. cit., ۱۲۵ -۲

bear scrutiny, because the belief in two Ghaybas did not come newly into being after the death of the fourth Saf'ir in ۳۲۹/۹۴۱, nor was it invented by al-Nu'mani and those scholars who followed his footsteps, such as al-Saduq, al-Khazzaz, al-Mufid (d. ۴۱۳/۱۰۲۲) and al-Tusi (d. ۴۶۰/۱۰۶۷). They merely clarified the consistency between the two concealments of the Twelfth Imam and the traditions predicting their .(occurrence(۱

From the historical viewpoint there are several reports which reveal that the traditions speaking about two concealments already existed prior to the year ۳۲۹/۹۴۱ when the second occultation began and that they were used by the Waqifa and the .Imamites

The Waqifa who stopped at the seventh Imam Musa al-Kazim (d. ۱۸۳/۷۹۹) contending that he was al-Qa'im al-Mahdi, had narrated these traditions. Among the Waqifite narrators is Abu Muhammad 'Ali b. Ahmad al-'Alawi, who wrote a book in support of Waqifite doctrine called Fi Nusrat al-Waqifa. He mentions this tradition attributed to :al-Sadiq

The Sahib al-Amr (i.e. al-Qa'im) will have two occultations, one of which will be longer" than the other. Finally people will say that he has died and others will say that he has been killed. Only a few of his followers will continue to support his Imamate, and no

(one will know his whereabouts and his affairs except his servant".(۲)

As we have previousely seen, one group of the Imamites held that the eleventh Imam had not died in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴, but had merely disappeared and would return and be recognized, only to disappear again

p: ۲۱۵

.T. al-Ghayba, ۱۱۰ -۱
.al-'Alawi, Fi Nusrat al- Waqifa, quoted in T. al-Ghayba, ۴۴ -۲

.(before finally rising as al-Qa'im(۱)

According to al-Nawbakhti (d. ca. ۳۱۰/۹۲۲) this group based its claim on the generally accepted narration which states that al-Qa'im will have two concealments(۲). Agha Buzurg reports that such traditions were included by al-Hasan b. Mahbub al-Zarrad in Kitab al-Mashyakha,(۳) and by al-Fadl b. Shadhan (d. ۲۶۰/۸۷۳) in Kitab al-Ghayba,(۴) but .these works are not extant

Fortunately, al-Kulayni, who lived during the short occultation, has included three of :these traditions in al-Kafi. According to one of these traditions, al-Sadiq said

Al-Qa'im will have two concealments, one of them short and the other long. In the" first only his intimate partisans will know his whereabouts, while in the second only his (close associates will know his whereabouts."(۵)

These traditions predicting the two concealments of the Twelfth Imam which are reported by al-Hasan b. Mahbub, al-Fadl b. Shadhan and al-Kulayni were not invented .by the Imamite narrators as is Sachedina's belief

On the contrary, such traditions were the main reason why Imamite scholars like Ibn Qubba(۶) and al-Nu'mani put forward the claim that the Twelfth Imam was al-Qa'im al-Mahdi, since they applied them to the historical circumstances which accompanied the career of the Twelfth Imam from ۲۶۰/۸۷۴ until the discontinuation of his direct communication with his followers after the death of his fourth Saf'ir in ۳۲۹/۹۴۱. Thus al-

,Nu'mani, after narrating such traditions, states

Considering the large number of traditions predicting the concealment transmitted" through the centuries, if the concealment had not occurred the very principle of the Imama would be

p: ۲۱۶

.Q. Maqalat, ۱۰۶ -۱

.N. Firaq, ۹۷ -۲

.Buzurg, al-Dhari'a, XXI, ۶۹ -۳

.Quoted in the T. al-Ghayba, ۲۷۴ -۴

.al-Kafi, ۱, ۳۴۰ -۵

.Kama'l, ۱۱۲ -۶

invalid. However by its occurrence Allah the Exalted has proved the authenticity of the Imams' warnings about the occultation and the correctness of their belief in it which they held generation after generation. In so doing, Allah obliged the Shi'a to accept .(it"(۱

The Attitude of the Ordinary Imamites towards the Second Occultation .۴

Despite the fact that the Imamite narrators like al-Nu'mani accepted the second occultation of the Twelfth Imam and contented themselves with the traditions going back to before ۲۶۰/۸۷۴ which predicted its occurrence, the vast majority of the .ordinary Imamites disagreed with them

They argued that if the Imam was born in ۲۵۶/۸۷۰, he was ۷۳ years old by the end of the first occultation in ۳۲۹/۹۴۱, and this accords with the life span of a normal person. They concluded that he had probably died, since death is the natural end for a person living to such an age. Al-Nu'mani describes the confusion among the Imamite :populace as follows

The majority of the Imamites asked regarding the successor of al-Hasan, "Where is" he?", "How could this happen?", "For how long will he be concealed?" and "How much

"?longer will he live, since he is now about ٧٣ years old

Some of them believed that he was dead. Other groups denied his birth or even his existence, and mocked those who believed in him. Some merely found it difficult to accept the prolongation of his concealment because they could not imagine that it (was within the power of God. . . to prolong the age of His wali (i.e. the Imam

p: ٢١٧

.N. al-Ghayba, ۶ -١

(and cause him to reappear afterwards" .(١ . . .

According to al-Nu'mani the bulk of these groups abandoned their belief in the hidden Imam. In fact those who continued to hold a firm belief irrhis Imamate were a small minority belonging to the circles of narrators, like Ibn Qubba and al-Nu'mani himself, (who based their belief on the traditions of the Imams.(٢

Many scholars shared the perplexity of the Imamite masses over the prolonged occultation of the Twelfth Imam. According to Ibn al-Nadim, Abu Sahl Isma'il b. 'Ali al-Nawbakhti was the first to hold the opinion that the Twelfth Imam had died during his occultation, that his son had succeeded him, and that the Imama would continue in his (progeny until Allah resurrected the Twelfth Imam.(٣

The attribution of this statement to Abu Sahl may be sound, because in his defence and vindication of the concealment of the Imam written around the year ٢٩٠/٩٠٢, he does not expect the concealment to last beyond the life span of an ordinary person. ,He writes

Until the present time there has been one of his hidden and reliable adherents, who" claims that he is the Imam's Gate (Bab) and the intermediary for his commands and orders to his followers. The period of the occultation (of the Imam) has not become so prolonged that it is exceptional and beyond the length of the concealments of those (who went into concealment before him".(۴

Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. Ahmad b. 'Ali al-Salt al-Qummi was another Imamite scholar baffled

p: ۲۱۸

.N. al-Ghayba, ۸۰ -۱

.N. al-Ghayba, ۹۹; Ibn Qubba quoted in Kama'l, ۱۱۲ -۲

.Ibn al-Nadim, op. cit., ۲۲۵ -۳

.Abu Sahl al-Nawbakhti, Kitab al-Tanbih, quoted in Kama'l, ۳ -۴

by the discontinuation of direct communication with the Imam because of his prolonged occultation. Thus he went along with a philosopher from Bukhara in (doubting the Imam's existence.(۱

Several remarks made about twenty years after the beginning of the second occultation (around the year ۳۵۲/۹۶۳) suggest that confusion and despair over the .immediate return of the Twelfth Imam became a dominant feature in Imamite circles

Moreover harsh attacks on the concealment of the Twelfth Imam by such Mu'tazilites as Abu al-Qasim al-Balkhi(۲) and such Zaydites as Abu Zayd al-'Alawis(۳) and al-Sahib b. 'Abbad(۴) increased this confusion among the Imamite populace from Nisapur to (Baghdad, so that many Imamites abandoned their belief.(۵

The confusion over the prolongation of the occultation along with the attacks from opposition groups encouraged the Imamite narrators to justify the Ghayba by composing works. At first they gathered their material from traditions attributed to the Prophet and the Imams. Such works are exemplified by al-Nu'mani's Kitab al-Ghayba and al-Saduq's Kamal al-Din.

The latter explains that he composed his work while he was living in Nisapur, because concealment of the Imam caused perplexity and bafflement among the majority of the Shi'a who used to visit him and consequently they had gone astray. Their number .included even the well-known Qummi scholar Muhammad b. al-Salt

This situation provoked him into writing a work quoting the authentic narrations attributed to the Prophet and the Imams on this issue. According to him, these narrations had already been assembled in al-Usul al-Arba'mi'a and had

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.Kama'l, ۳ -۱

.Quoted by al-Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar, al-Mughni, II, ۱۷۶, ۱۸۲-۳ -۲

.Quoted in Kama'l, ۹۴-۱۲۲, ۱۲۶ -۳

.Ibn 'Abbad, Nusrat Madhahib al-Zaydiyya, ۲۱۱ -۴

.Kama'l, ۲-۳, ۱۶ -۵

been written down before ۲۶۰/۸۷۴ by the followers of al-Sadiq and the other Imams(۱). He also devotes a chapter to people who lived to be more than ۱۰۰ years old in order .to vindicate the advanced age of the Twelfth Imam during his occultation

By the end of the ۴th/۱۰th century, it seems that the argument based on traditions and employed by al-Kulayni, al-Mas'udi, al-Nu'mani, al-Saduq and al-Khazzaz were no longer sufficient(۲). Hence the Imamite scholars resorted to theological arguments ('Ilm al-Kalam) and used them extensively to vindicate the Imam's concealment. Al-Mufid (d. ۴۱۳/ ۱۰۲۲) was perhaps the pioneer in this period.

In his work al-Fusul al-'Ashara fi al-Ghayba he tries to prove the existence of the hidden Imam on the basis of two principles: the necessity of the existence of an Imam at every period of time and the infallibility of this Imam. Al-Mufid's treatment of this subject became the framework for later Imamite scholars like his pupil al-Karajaki (d. .۴۴۹/۱۰۵۷), al-Murtada and al-Tusi

In al-Ghayba, the last of these advances both the traditional and the theological arguments for vindicating the complete occultation of the Twelfth Imam. However that may be, the theological approach goes beyond the historical approach of the .present work and pertains to a later period

The Application of the Epithet al-Mahdi to the Twelfth Imam .۵

The traditions used by the Imamites during the short occultation to support the view that the Twelfth Imam was the one who will rise with the sword (al-Qa'im bil-sayf) were the same traditions talking about the Twelfth Imam as the expected Mahdi.

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p: ٢٢٠

١- ١٩, ٢-٣, Kama'l.

٢- There are two reports which support this point. First al-Saduq mentions that the Zaydites accused the Imamites of inventing the Prophetic traditions which indicate that his successors will be twelve Imams (Kama'l, ٦٧-٨). The Zaydite al- Saib b. 'Abbad (d. ٣٨١/٩٩١) held this claim against the Imamites (Ibn 'Abbad, Nusrat Madhahib al-Zaydiyya, ٢٠٩-١٢). Also the Isma'ilis did so. Ivanow (ed.), Zahr al-Ma'atli, ٥١.

other words, the two ideas, al-Qa'im and al-Mahdi, were already combined and applied to the Twelfth Imam at the time of the Prophet. But, as we have already seen (pp ٢١-٢٣, ٣٠) the Imams due to certain reasons revealed it only to a few of their followers instructing them not to publicize it. In spite of this Sachedina holds that

". . . the Mahdiism of the Twelfth Imamite Imam was a later development in the theory of the Imamate of the hidden Imam, which combined the already known belief in the coming of al-Mahdi to restore justice and equity with the prolonged occultation of the Twelfth Imam".(١)

Sachedina reached this conclusion after examining the Kutub al-Ziyarat(٢) which was included by al-Majlisi in his work Bihar al-Anwar(٣). According to Sachedina the earliest work of this literary genre is related on the authority of the Twelfth Imam himself in reply to a letter written by Abd Allah al-Himyari (d. ٢٩٠/٩٠٢). Sachedina says,

"In this Ziyarah which I have carefully examined, there is no mention of the title al-Mahdi at all. The Twelfth Imam is not addressed as the Mahdi, the one promised by the Prophet. This is the first Ziyarah mentioned in this section of the Book on the Shrines."(٤)

From the historical point of view there are several points in Sachedina's thesis which .are open to question

Firstly, according to sayings attributed to al-Baqir and al-Jawad, all the Imams hold the title al-Qa'im, inferring that they have been entrusted with the execution of Allah's

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.Sachedina, op. cit., ۸۳ -۱

Kutub al-Ziyarat are the books which give details of how to undertake pilgrimages -۲ .to the shrines of the Imams

.Bihar, CII, ۸۱ -۳

.Sachedina, op. cit., ۸۶-۷ -۴

order (Kullun Qa'imun bi Amr Allah); in addition, they all hold the title al-Mahdi, whose duty is to guide people to the Religion, of Allah (kulluna Nahdi ila Din Allah).(۱) For this reason, we find that in the books on pilgrimage or Ziyara, all the Imams are (addressed as al-A'imma al-Rashidun al-Mahdiyyun.(۲

Consequently the Twelfth Imam must hold the title of al-Mahdi in this meaning, even though here the word has quite a different meaning from the epithet al-Qa'im al-.(Mahdi, the one promised by the Prophet who will rise with the sword(۳

-وَ أَنَّ الْمَهْدِیَّ أَنْتَصِرُ بِهِ لِدِینِی وَ أُظْهِرُ بِهِ دَوْلَتِی وَ أَنْتَقِمُ بِهِ مِنْ أَعْدَائِی وَ أُعْبَدُ بِهِ طَوْعاً وَ کَرْهاً ۸۱۱

-وَ إِنَّ الْقَائِمَ إِذَا قَامَ سَارَ فِیهِمْ بِالسَّیْفِ وَ السَّبْیِ وَ ذَلِکَ أَنَّهُ یَعْلَمُ أَنَّ شِیعَتَهُ لَمْ یُظْهَرْ عَلَیْهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَبَداً ۸۱۲

Secondly, in the Imamite works there is a certain consistency between the signs indicating the rise of al-Qa'im and his performance of his duty on earth following his return and those pointing to the rise of al-Mahdi. This can be noted in such statements :as the following

It becomes clear from numerous statements of this nature that the Imams used two different titles when referring to one person. A tradition attributed to al-Sadiq makes the identity between the two figures explicitly for when he was asked by his follower

Abu Said alKhurasani, "Are al-Mahdi and al-Qa'im one and the same person?" He replied "Yes.(۴)

Hence we find that al-Nu'mani sometimes refers to the Twelfth Imam

p: ۲۲۲

۱- al-Kafi, I, ۳۰۷, ۵۳۶; Kama'l, ۲۶۳; al-Tabarsi, al-Ihtijaj, II, ۲۴۹-۵۰; Ithbat, ۱۷۸-۹.

۲- al-Saduq, Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih, II, ۳۷۱; al-Tusi, al-Tahdhib, VI, ۱۱۴; N. al-Ghayba, ۴۵.

۳- al-Saffar (d. ۲۹۰), Basa'ir al-Darajat, f. ۵۰a; al-Kafi, I, ۲۴۳.

۴- T. al-Ghayba, (Najaf, ۱۹۶۵), ۲۹۶.

as al-Qa'im and sometimes as al-Mahdi without imagining that such an application of the two terms would lead to confusion among the Imamites. It is clear that the two titles refer to the same person since al-Nu'mani also reports a narration attributed to al-Baqir revealing that al-Mahdi is al-Qa'im bi-l-Sayf.

When the Qa'im of the People of the House (Ahl al-Bayt) rises he will distribute equally among the people and deal justly with his subjects. He is called al-Mahdi because he will be the Guide to secret matters.(۱)

For this reason al-Nu'mani refers to the Twelfth Imam as al-Qa'im al-Mahdi.(۲)

Moreover it is clear that the expected Mahdi acquired this title because he will be 'guided' by Allah and will guide men to undertake a spiritual transformation of society, just as he acquired the title al-Qa'im bil-Sayf because he will rise by militant means to put into practice this transformation, namely the establishment of a truly Islamic State based entirely upon the shari'a as interpreted and implemented by the Prophet and his rightful successors, the Imams. This can also be seen in al-Mufid's interpretation of the doctrine of return (al-Raj'a):

"I say that Allah the Exalted will return some of the dead people to the present world in the physical forms which they had before. He will do this to honour one group and to

debase another, to grant superiority to the faithful over the deniers, and to judge between the oppressors and the oppressed. This will take place after the rising of

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.N. al-Ghayba, ۱۲۵ -۱
.N. al-Ghayba, ۱۲۵ -۲

(al-Mahdi of the Family of Muhammad". (۱

Moreover most of the 'Alids who had been inspired by the Prophetic tradition predicting the rise of al-Mahdi held the title al-Qa'im al-Mahdi when they rose in arms, (like Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq, who rose in ۱۹۹/۸۱۴. (۲

Thirdly, al-Kulayni and al-Mas'udi, both of whom lived during the period of the short occultation, report a tradition which explicitly refers to the Twelfth Imam as al-Mahdi: ,'Ali b. Abi Talib said

I thought about a child who will be from my flesh, the eleventh from my line of descendants. He is the Mahdi who will fill the earth with justice and equity when the height of injustice and tyranny in the world has been reached. He will live in a state of occultation as a result of which a group of people will go astray and another will (remain faithful. (۳

Al-Saduq (d. ۳۸۱/۹۹۱) includes similar traditions referring to the Twelfth Imam as al-Mahdi and as al-Qa'im. (۴) He also cites the text of a visit (ziyara) to the Twelfth Imam during his occultation which is attributed to the second Saf'ir, Abu Ja'far, (d. ۳۰۵/۹۱۷), (who addresses the Twelfth Imam as al-Hujja al-Qa'im al-Mahdi. (۵

In the light of these points one can conclude that after the Twelfth Imam went into occultation for the first time, the Imamite scholars considered him as al-Qa'im al-Mahdi, the one who will rise with the sword. This was a strongly supported belief by .the time of the occurrence of the second or complete occultation

'The Effect of the Complete Occultation on the Position of the Imamite Fuqaha .۶

The occurrence of the second

.al-Mufid, Awa'il al-Maqalat, ۵۰ -۱

.Maqatil, ۳۵۹ -۲

.al-Kafi, I, ۱۹, ۳۵, ۳۳۸; Ithbat, ۲۶۰ -۳

.Kama'l, ۲۵۶, ۲۶۰, ۲۸۰, ۲۸۹, ۳۳۳, ۳۳۸, ۳۴۲ -۴

.Kama'l, ۵۱۲, ۵۱۳ -۵

occultation of the Twelfth Imam, followed by the immediate dissolution of the Imamite Wikala after the death of al-Sammari, the fourth safar in ۳۲۹/۹۴۱, left a serious vacuum in the Imamite leadership. This situation allowed the Imamite jurists .(al-Fuqaha') to extend their activities

They reached a consensus 'that the concealed Imam would be alive until the moment of his rising in arms, irrespective of the length of his concealment. They based their view upon such traditions as that attributed to alSadiq, who says to his adherent ,Hazim

O Hazim, the Sahib al-Amr (al-Qa'im) has two occultations and will rise after the second one. Anyone who comes to you claiming that he has purified his hands in the (soil of his grave (i.e. the grave of al-Qa'im), do not believe him. (۱

But in reality they found themselves in need of a leader to save the congregation from possible disintegration, and there was no one to undertake this task except themselves. By the last quarter of the fourth/tenth century the ordinary Imamites were accepting the statements of the jurists as the actual statements of the Twelfth (Imam, but they did not consider their authority equal to his.(۲

In other words the fuqaha' were considered the spokesmen for the Imam's views concerning Islamic doctrine and law. But they were not in charge of the office of the Imdma because as is explained by authors such as al-Tusi and al-Majlisi, it is not possible for anyone to hold the position of Imam before the rise

.N. al-Ghayba, ۹۱; T. al-Ghayba, ۲۷۴-۵; Ikhtiyar, ۴۷۶ -۱
.Kama'l, ۸۱ -۲

(of al-Qa'im.(۱

For this reason the eminent leaders of the Imamites, al-Mufid (d.۴۱۳/۱۰۲۲) and al-Tusi (d. ۴۶۰/۱۰۶۷), refused to give themselves authority over the half of the khums (۲) which was set aside for the Imam. Al-Mufid held that any faithful follower who wanted to pay the Imam's share should put it aside and either keep it in a safe place or bury it.

In case of his death, he should turn it over to a trustworthy person to give to the Imam when he rises. As for the other half of the khums, which is called sadat share, it should be divided into three shares and distributed equally among the needy members of the Prophet's family, i.e. the orphans, the poor and the penniless (travellers.(۳

Al-Mufid's view was also held by such later scholars as al-Tusi, Abu al-Salah and Ibn Zahra al-Halabi. This consensus among the Fuqaha' concerning the khums continued until the ۷th/۱۳th century. But since the Twelfth Imam's occultation prolonged, the believers did not know what to do with the Imam's share in the khums, which they have been trusted with by their predecessors.

By the beginning of the ۷th AH/۱۳th century the Imamite Fuqaha', in particular, al-Muhaqiq al-Hilli wanted to solve this problem. He began receiving the Imam's share in the khums and spent it on religious activities serving the Shiite cause.

This step taken by the later Fuqaha' marked a break with the authority of the earlier Fuqaha'. It was a factor along with other previous

.T. al-Ghayba, ۲۱۵; Bihar, LII, ۹۹ -۱
The khums (the fifth) in Shiite law is an obligatory tax based on the following - ۲

Qur'anic verse: "And know ye that whatever of a thing ye acquire, a fifth of it is for God, and for the Apostle, and for the Apostle's near relatives and the orphans and the needy and the penniless traveller" (al-Anfal, ٨: ٤١). The Imams collected the khums from their followers and used the first three shares for the benefit of the congregation and the kindred of the Prophet, and the second three shares for distribution among the orphans, the needy, and the penniless traveller (wayfarer) of the Prophet's family; Asl ‘Asim b. Hamid al-Hannat, f. ٢٢; al-Kafi, II, ٦٢٦-٨.

٣ - - al-Muhaqqiq al-Hili, al-Mu’tabar fi sharh al-Mukhtasar (Qumm, ١٣١٨), ٢٩٨; al-Jawami' al-Fiqhiyya (Iran, ١٢٧٦), ١٢, ٧٦.

factors for the extension of the role of the Fuqaha' after the second occultation which can be seen in the following points:

Firstly, the prolongation of the occultation of the Twelfth Imam enabled the Imamite fuqaha' to develop their role from mere narrators of traditions into mujtahidun. It has been noted that as regards legal statutes (al-Ahkam) the fuqaha' used to consult the Twelfth Imam via his four representatives during the time of the short occultation (٢٦٠-٣٢٩/٨٧٤-٩٤١). In other words their main function was to narrate the traditions of the Imams, and they continued to perform this function in the early years of the second occultation.(١)

Thus they rejected the arguments based on reason (‘Aql) put forward first by Ibn ‘Aqil al-’Umam (in the first half of the fourth/tenth century and then by Ibn al-Junayd al-Askafi (d. ٣٨١/٩٩١). Both of these figures refined Imamite jurisprudence,put forward new ideas, separated the discussions about principles (usul) from those about subordinates (furu’) and based their method on the basic principles of jurisprudence. Their method was rejected by the Imamite Fuqaha' because it might lead to wrong inference in finding the religious rules.

They considered it a sort of wrong analogy (qiyas fasid) similar to that which was established and implemented by non-shi'ite jurists.

The prolongation of the Twelfth Imam's concealment, which was attacked by Zaydite scholars and others, led the Imamite jurists to introduce rational arguments in order

(to defend their belief in the existence of the Twelfth Imam(۲)

Men who had been mere narrators of traditions

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۱- For details see Ibn Dawud, al-Rijal, ۱۱۰; T. al-Fihrist, ۲۶۸, ۳۶۳; Ibn Qubba, quoted in Kama'l, ۱۲۰; al-Najashi, ۳۱۵.

۲- al-Sahib b. 'Abbad, op. cit., ۲۱۱.

became scholastic theologians (Mutakallimun). This change in the role of the Fuqaha' can be seen in al-Mufid's works. His works mark a break with earlier Imamite writing like al-Saffar and alKulayni's works which are purely collections of traditions, whereas al-Mufid's are mainly treatises written in defence of the Imamite doctrine, in particular, the belief in the Twelfth Imam's occultation.

Al-Mufid also was a narrator of traditions (Muhaddith), but since he gave priority to the theological issues he was named the speaker of the Shiites (Mutakallim al-Shi'a). Moreover with the passing of time new situations arose to which the shari'a had to be applied, and since direct communication with the Twelfth Imam had come to an end, someone had to be found to give an answer to these questions.

Thus the Imamite Fuqaha' expanded their role by undertaking Ijtihad (۱) to answer such questions and to fill the vacuum which had been brought about by the concealment of the Twelfth Imam. Al-Mufid may have been the first jurist to practice Ijtihad. Then al-Tusi (d.۴۶۰/۱۰۶۷) gave a definite shape to it.(۲)

Secondly, in light of the first point it is clear that during the last quarter of the fourth/tenth century the Imamite Fuqaha' acquired authority to give legal judgements (fatwa) to a much greater extent than those who had been contemporary with the beginning of the second occultation and the dissolution of the underground organization. It has already been noted that after the death of alSammari in ۳۲۹/۹۴۱ the Imamite agents and such

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۱- Ijtihad, in Sunni law means the pronouncing of independent judgements on legal or theological questions based on the interpretation and application of the four principles, the Qur'an, traditions, consensus, and reason (Aql). According to the Imamites, Ijtihad is employing all one's power to arrive at speculative probability (zann) in a case or in a rule of divine law depending mainly on the Qur'an and traditions; al-Ghurayf, al-Ijtihad wal-Fatwa (Beirut, ۱۹۷۸), ۹.

۲- For the role of al-Tusi in the formulation of Imamite ijtihad, see Mahmud Ramyar, Shaykh Tusi, Ph.D. thesis (Edinburgh, ۱۹۷۷), ۸۸-۹۲.

fuqaha' as Muhammad b. Ahmad b. al-Walid were expecting the Imam's reappearance with the sword in the near future, and for this reason they refused to receive any of the khums supposing that it was forbidden for them to do so.(۱)

But ever since the time of al-Mufid the fuqaha' have granted themselves authority to receive the sadat share of the khums in order to distribute it amongst the needy of the Prophet's kindred. Since nothing was stipulated concerning the direct deputyship of the Twelfth Imam(۲), the Imamite fuqaha' gradually gained enough authority to act as his indirect representatives. They based their new position on traditions which lay down the role they were to have while the Imam was in hiding. Below are the main traditions which have been used in supporting the authority of the fuqaha':

i) The Twelfth Imam issued a pronouncement (Tawqi) in reply to Ishaq b. Ya'qub via his second Saf'ir:

As for the events which will occur, turn to the narrators of our traditions, because they (the narrators) are my proof to you, while I am the proof of Allah to them.(۳)

ii) Al-Tabarsi mentions this tradition attributed to the eleventh Imam:

It is obligatory for the populace to follow the jurist who refrains from committing wrong, mentions his faith, opposes carnal desire, and obeys Allah's command.(۴)

iii) Al-Tabarsi reports another transmission on the authority of the tenth Imam concerning the role of the fuqaha':

After the occultation of your Qa'im a group of the ‘ulama' will call people to believe in

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١- T. al-Ghayba, ٢٧٠.
٢- al-Khumayni, al-Hukuma al-Islamiyya, (Beirut, ١٩٧٨), ۴٨.
٣- al-’Amili, al-Wasa’il, XVIII, ١٠١; Bihar, LIII, ١٨١; al-Khumayni, op. cit., ٧٧.
۴- al-Tabarsi, al-Ihtijaj, II,. ٢۶٣-۴; al-’Amili, al-Wasa’il, XVIII, ٩۴-۵.

his (al-Qa’im's) Imamate and defend his religion by using proofs sent by Allah, so that they might save the weak-minded faithful from either the deceptions of Satan and his followers, or the deceptions of the anti-’Alids (al-Nawasib).

If none of these ‘ ulama' remain, then everyone will stray from the religion of Allah. However, as the pilot holds the rudder of the ship, the ‘ulama' will hold firmly onto the hearts of the weak-minded Shiites, preventing them from straying. Those ‘ulama' are the most excellent in the view of Allah the Exalted.(١)

It is clear from the above traditions that the fuqaha' must possess two qualities before they can acquire the right to be the deputies of the Imam without direct stipulation. Firstly they should be knowledgeable in the law. Secondly they should be just. Then, irrespective of their family, whether they are from the progeny of al-Husayn or not, they are entitled to be deputies. It is worth repeating that the four Saf’irs of the Twelfth Imam were not descendants of ‘Ali.

This may indicate that the Twelfth Imam wanted to train and raise his followers to accept, after his complete occultation, the leadership of the just and knowledgeable fuqaha', even if they were not ‘Alids. Moreover, it can be noted that after the beginning of the complete occultation, the majority of able fuqaha' were not from the progeny of ‘Ali. Among such fuqaha' were al-Nu'mani (d. ٣۶٠/٩٧٠), al-Saduq (d. ٣٨١/٩٩١), al-Mufid (d. ۴١٣/١٠٢٢).

'In short the authority of the fuqaha

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.al-Tabarsi, al-Ihtijaj, II, ۲۶۰ -۱

became so well-established amongst the Imamites that a considerable number of the later fuqaha', such as al-Muhaqqiq al-Hilli (d. ۶۷۶/۱۲۷۷) granted the faqih complete (authority over the deputyship of the hidden Imam.(۱)

He gave himself as a faqih the right to deal with the Imam's share of the khums while the early fuqaha' like al-Mufid only gave themselves authority over the part of the khums (sadat share) intended for the orphans, the poor, and the penniless travellers .of the Prophet's kindred

Al-Hilli argues that if the first half of the khums (the Imam's share) is obligatory, then it must be distributed even during the Imam's occultation, because that which, Allah .has made obligatory cannot be abrogated on account of the occultation of the Imam

He continues to assert that the one who is charged with distributing the share of the Imam according to the needs of the Prophet's kindred must hold the deputyship of (the Imam in legal matters i.e. that he must be one of the just Imamite fuqaha'.(۲)

The extension of the authority of the Imamite fuqaha' as a result of the prolongation of the Imam's occultation was a positive factor contributing to the unity of the Imamite community. It has been noted that after the death of each Imam, the .Imamites split into various factions

This trend reached its peak on the death of the eleventh Imam in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴, when his followers divided into fourteen groups. But after the occultation of the Twelfth Imam, the fuqaha' became united in

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.al-Muhaqqiq al-Hilli, al-Mu'tabar, ۲۹۸ -۱

.al-Muhaqqiq al-Hilli, al-Mu'tabar, ٢٩٨ -٢

.their attempt to establish their own religious and political authority

The force which united them was the belief in the Imamate of the concealed Imam. As a result, Shi'ism was saved from splitting into further factions. Consequently, the number of its followers increased. The death of a faqih who believed in the Imamate of the hidden Imam did not lead to a split amongst the faqih's followers, and they usually accepted the leadership of another Imamite faqih.

Thus all the fourteen factions which had grown up among the followers of al-'Askari disappeared around the year ٣٧٣/٩٨٣ except for the one group which supported the Imamate of the Twelfth Imam, who was in a state of complete occultation.(١)

Conclusion

:The conclusion of the present work can be summarized as follows

i) The problem of the nature of the Ghayba of the Twelfth Imam is an old one in the history of Shi'ism and is closely connected with the question of the Imama. From the beginning the Shiites held that the Prophet could not have left his community without a leader to supervise the interpretation of the shari'a and its implementation in society.

On the contrary, he had appointed 'Ali as his successor and stipulated that the leadership of the community should pass to al-Hasan and al…Husayn, and thereafter to the eldest son of each subsequent Imam from the line of al…Husayn until the rise of alMahdi.

However, the Imams were unable to rule the whole community after the death of the

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.al-Fusul al-Mukhtara, ٢۶١ -١

Prophet. Since political power had been usurped by others, the Imams were forced to

seek to regain it according to those methods which they felt to be sound and legal, even though the political and economic resources of their opponents were stronger .than their own, especially after the martyrdom of al-Husayn

None of the Imams after al-Husayn involved themselves directly in any obvious political activities or took part in direct incitement to revolt. In fact it seems that they :restricted their activities to three major areas

A) They encouraged the dissemination of Prophetic traditions amongst the people to acquaint them with the right of the People of the House of the Prophet (Ahl al-Bayt) to lead the community and to show them that their exclusion from actual political leadership did not mean that they were content to adopt a purely spiritual stance, nor .did it imply tacit support of the government of the day

Indeed they were totally committed to their struggle to regain control, but only when circumstances indicated the probable success of their rebellion, and when they were sure of the support of a sufficient number of faithful followers to aid the revolution .and to implement Islam according to the Imamite approach

B) From the Imamate of al-Sadiq the Imams circulated Prophetic Hadith amongst the Imamites themselves concerning the rise of an Imam from Ahl al-Bayt who would establish the righteous state. This Imam would be al-Qa'im al-Mahdi, who was mentioned in the Prophetic traditions. He would first go into

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a state of concealment from which he would continue to direct the affairs of the .Imama. Then he would go into total occultation

But the majority of the traditions did not specify which Imam this would be, nor did they stipulate a definite date for his uprising. This obscurity allowed some 'Alids to use these traditions to support their own political aims, without heeding the instructions of the Imam as regards the correct circumstances for the concealment and rising of al-.Qa'im al-Mahdi

A clear example of this is seen in the case of the Isma’ilis, who broke away from the Imamites and continued to carry out their activities secretly between the years ۱۴۵...۲۹۶/۷۶۲...۹۰۸, until one of them managed to reach power in the year ۲۹۶/۹۰۸, claiming .the title al-Mahdi

The Zaydites also used these traditions in their attempts to gain control, but lacked the precaution and careful planning of the Isma’ills and the Imamites. In fact the obscurity of these Hadiths, related from al...Sadiq was one of the reasons that some Imamites believed that the concealed Imam was Musa al...Kazim, who would rise as .al-Qa’im al...Mahdi These people were called the Waqifa

C) The early Imams believed that any of them could be al-Qa’im al...Mahdi if the conditions were right but after the failure of their intended revolt in ۱۴۰/۷۵۷, they .decided that it would be illadvised to fix a particular date for another uprising

In this way the Imams hoped to encourage their followers in religious activities which would pave the

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way for more political matters at the appropriate time. At the same time they also secretly encouraged their most faithful followers, who found that they had no option .but to rebel against unjust and tyrannical rulers

One of the results of these policies was the establishment of the Wikala during the Imamate of al...Sadiq as a means of supervising the activities of the Imamites and guiding them towards the final aim of the Imams, namely the establishment of a truly Islamic state based entirely upon the shari’a as interpreted and implemented by the .Prophet and his Household

D) The ‘Abbasid authorities were aware of the danger posed by the Shiites and especially by the Imamites. So they tried to turn the attention of the people away from the rights of Ahl al...Bayt (the People of the House) by fabricating Prophetic .traditions which stated that the Imam after the Prophet was al...'Abbas and not 'Ali

Simultaneously, they worked to divide the Shiites internally by appointing men from the Jaririyya to certain sensitive posts, so that the Jaririyya could investigate the Imamites and spread propaganda against them. After the failure of this policy, from the time of al-Ma'mun the ‘Abbasids instituted a new plan which was intended to curtail the revolutionary activities of the Shiites. Part of this plan was to make the .Imams their courtiers so that they could watch their every move

This can be observed in the policy of al…Ma'mun, who brought al…Rid’a from Medina to Merv and appointed him

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his heir apparent, keeping him under house arrest. Al…Ma'mun followed a similar policy with the ninth Imam al…Jawad. Later the ‘Abbasid caliphs followed al…Ma'mun's lead in their attitude towards the tenth Imam, al…Hadi, and his son al…‘Askari, both of .whom were kept under house arrest in Samarra for most of their lives

It thus became extremely difficult for the Imams to have normal relations with their .followers, except their closest associates with whom they held secret meetings

It seems likely that the house arrest of the later Imams led them to expand the role of the organization, the Wikala, and to entrust the Saf’ir with more authority to supervise the Imamites' activities. From the time of al…Jawad onwards, the Imam began to guide the activities of his followers through his Saf’ir. The ordinary Imamites found such a situation strange and had to be educated to accept such indirect .communication with the Imam

However the role of the Saf’ir during this period is not as obvious as his later position during the first occultation of the Twelfth Imam, because the Imam's whereabouts .were well…known and his position clear

It also seems that the continuation of the house arrest encouraged the Imams to find a means which might release them from its restrictions. From the years ۲۴۵…۲۵۰/۸۵۹…۶۴ onwards statements related on the authority of al…Hadi and al…‘Askari, indicating that

an unnamed Twelfth Imam would go into concealment, were circulating amongst the Imamites. Furthermore al..Hadi and al..'Askari ordered their close agents to follow the instructions

.(of 'Uthman b. Said al'Umari and his son Abu Ja'far (i.e. the first and the second safrs

It appears therefore that outwardly and historically the Imam's first concealment grew from the desire of his fathers to evade the surveillance of the government of the .day, so that he could safely perform the duties of the Imama

E) An attempt has been made in..this study to prove that the eleventh Imam, al..'Askari, left a single male successor, whose name was Muhammad and who was smuggled by his father from Samarra to Medina in ۲۵۹/۸۷۳. He was the Twelfth Imam and his concealment began during the years ۲۶۰..۳۲۹/۸۷۴..۹۴۱. This was regarded as his first occultation, during which he continued to carry out his activities without disclosing his identity or his whereabouts, except to his four Saf'irs and certain select .followers

The first occultation was distinguished by the widening of the role of the Wikala. Throughout this period the four safrs directed the Imamites' activities. Their names were 'Uthman b. Said al..'Umari, Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. 'Uthman, al..Husayn b. Ruh al-Nawbakhti and 'Ali b. Muhammad al..Sammari. Baghdad was the centre of activities for the saf r, who had agents in other provinces, beneath whom were many local .agents

A critical study of this period reveals that the main function of the Saf'irs was to perform certain tasks previously undertaken by the Imams so as to save the Imam from the political pressure of the 'Abbasids, which had been directed toward his .predecessors from the time of al..Ma'mun

The split amongst the Imamites after the death of al.. 'Askari in ۲۶۰/۸۷۴۱ed the first and

the second Saf'irs to concentrate their efforts upon re…uniting the Imamite ranks by proving the existence of the Twelfth Imam and emphasizing that he was al-Qa'im al…Mahdi; that is, he who would undertake the elimination of oppressive government .by militant means

While the Imam was in hiding the role of the Saf'ir continued to increase so that by the time of the fourth Saf'ir, his statements began to be regarded as the statements of the Imam himself. It seems that the increased role of the Saf'ir was the result of the instructions of the Imam himself, who wanted his followers to accept the leadership .of the jurists until the. moment of his reappearance

F) On the death of the fourth Saf'ir in ۳۲۹/۹۴۱ no further Saf'ir was appointed and all direct communications with the Imam came to an end, which meant the end of the Imamite Wikala. This was also considered the beginning of the second occultation. At this stage the Imamites expected the Imam's reappearance in the near future, and as .a result none of the jurists dared to act on behalf of the Imam

However the prolongation of the occultation led them to attempt to fill the vacuum left by the death of the fourth Saf'ir. They turned their attention to theological matters and became the leaders of the Imamites in this field. Gradually they came to be seen ,as the hidden Imam's indirect deputies

.who were leading the community and instructing in the law during his occultation

Finally the concealment of the Twelfth Imam seems to have been closely connected :with two important phenomena

Firstly, with the occurrence of the second occultation, most of the Shiite revolts, .particularly those of the Zaydite and the Imamites, gradually disappeared

Secondly, when the Imams were openly living amongst their followers, they suffered along with them from the oppression of the government, which was suspicious of their ambitions. But after the second occultation this oppression all but disappeared,

and the Imamite jurists (Fuqaha) began to carry out their activities without .encountering the difficult conditions faced by their predecessors

This encouraged one to put forward the idea that Imams were throughout their lives trying to recover their usurped right, the political leadership of the Islamic state, by means which they believed to be correct and legal, while after the second occultation this task fell upon the Imamites themselves under the leadership of the Fuqaha; a .situation which has continued until the present day

In other words, as long as the Muslims are not ready for such political transformation the rise of the hidden Imam, the expected Mahdi, will be far. During his occultation it is the task of his followers in particular the Fuqaha' to make Muslims ready for this transformation. They should struggle to make them true committed Muslims .practicing the shari'a in its true sense in their daily life and in all aspects of society

The Fuqaha 'should convince

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the Muslims that their rightful leader is the hidden Imam, the expected Mahdi, who was divinely appointed and that he acquired this title, the Mahdi, because he will be 'guided' by Allah and will guide men to undertake a spiritual and political .transformation of society

Before the reappearance of the hidden Imam, the Fuqaha' can assume political authority in order to disseminate the above tasks and to implement the rules of the .shari 'a

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About center

In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ۹

:Introduction

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ۲۰۰۷, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

:Manifesto

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes of people interested in reading, with various formats in the .cyberspace

:Our Goals are

(propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t-

encouraging the populace particularly the youth in investigating the religious issues-

replacing useful contents with useless ones in the cellphones, tablets and computers-

providing services for seminary and university researchers-

spreading culture study in the publich-

paving the way for the publications and authors to digitize their works-

:Policies

acting according to the legal licenses-

relationship with similar centers-

avoiding parallel working-

merely presenting scientific contents-

mentioning the sources-

.It's obvious that all the responsibilities are due to the author

:Other activities of the institute

Publication of books, booklets and other editions-

Holding book reading competitions-

Producing virtual, three dimensional exhibitions, panoramas of religious and tourism-

places

.Producing animations, computer games and etc-

Launching the website with this address: www.ghaemiyeh.com-

Fabricatingdramatic and speech works-

Launching the system of answering religious, ethical and doctrinal questions-

Designing systems of accounting, media and mobile, automatic and handy systems,- web kiosks

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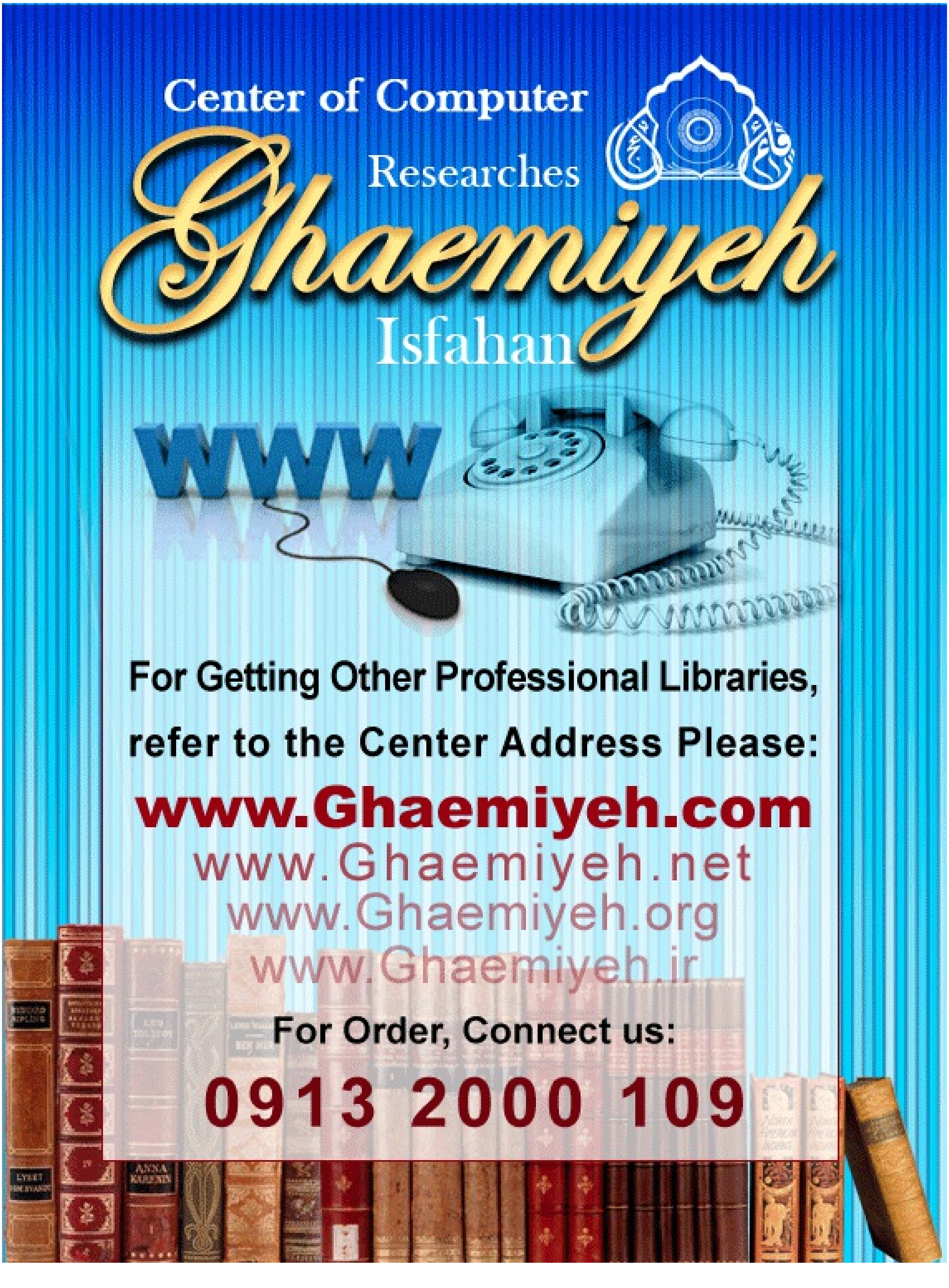
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